

2018 YWCA TORONTO WOMEN OF DISTINCTION



TOYO AJIBOLADE *Young Woman of Distinction*

An inspirational role model, mentor, and coach, Toyo Ajibolade, a third year Marketing Management student at Ryerson University, has turned the game of basketball into an empowering playing field. With leadership acumen well beyond her years, Toyo has developed Lady Ballers Camp – a girl-centred organization providing recreational and accessible basketball and sport programming to youth, particularly those from marginalized and racialized communities. Toyo’s primary objective is to be a bridge for young racialized women who are limited not by skill or determination, but by finance and opportunity.

As an aspiring young racialized athlete, Toyo became aware of the career halting barriers faced by women, particularly racialized women. She experienced how mounting financial requirements associated with professional sports created exclusive pathways to success – exclusivity often reserved to those of a particular socio-economic status. Toyo was able to look at the world around her with a very critical lens, and when she recognized the impact of gender and racial inequities, she mobilized to address this issue and create change.

Her outreach to disadvantaged and racialized communities as a source of recruitment for her basketball leadership program is intentional. At 16, Toyo was selected as the youngest recipient of Girls

Action Foundation’s Leadership Capacity Grant program and used that opportunity to create the “DUNK Like a Girl” initiative, a program combining basketball training and fitness with interactive workshops, focused on issues affecting all girls such as gender stereotypes, relationships, violence, and self-care.

In 2013, she was a recipient of the Leading Women, Leading Girls, Building Community Award from the office of the Ontario Women’s Directorate for her dedication to making the experiences had by people around her better and her ability to build bridges in the community. In December 2015, Toyo wrote a very compelling grant application to Maple Leaf Sports Entertainment (MLSE) for Lady Ballers Camp and received the Toronto Raptors Community Action grant for this young organization. Recently in 2017, Toyo was given the Citizen’s MVP award for community service by the Toronto Raptors. Toyo is committed to creating change in her communities and improving the lives of others.


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