

Young, Black, Female, and Educated By Elizabeth Richardson

If you've been keeping up with young Hollywood this past week, you've probably seen or heard the exciting news:

Yara Shahidi is going to Harvard.

The 17-year-old *Black-ish* actress made the announcement on [Instagram](#), sporting the crimson color in a university sweatshirt with the caption: "The paradox of education is precisely this - that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.' ~ James Baldwin".

In March, the star announced she got into all the colleges she applied to--which we're not surprised about. Besides being a successful actress, Shahidi is known for her hard work and dedication off camera. She is outspoken on social issues and has worked with Michelle Obama on various projects, including Glamour Magazine's 2016 International Day of the Girl, where she spoke on girls' education and self-esteem. The former First Lady, a mentor to Shahidi, is a Harvard Law School graduate and wrote four of her college recommendation letters.

Speaking of the Obamas, Shahidi is following a similar path as Malia Obama to take a gap year before attending Harvard University. Just as Shahidi, who plans to double-major in African-American studies and sociology, puts in the work to achieve her goals, Obama does as well. Malia has filled her time off with real-world experience in the media industry--including an internship on the set of Lena Dunham's popular HBO series, *Girls*.

The Internet has recognized the significance of these two women's acceptances to the Ivy League institution--especially as young, black women. But why the celebration?

Culture and race shape a person's experience in the world. For the girls who have been told they can't achieve certain opportunities or a certain level of education because of their skin color, **visibility matters**.

As celebrities in the spotlight, Yara and Malia are hyper-visible examples of black women who make strides in their education and future careers because of their intelligence and determination. And there are several others like them.

A [survey](#) by the National Center for Education Statistics reveals that black women are earning the most degrees in the U.S. This includes 67% of associate's degrees and 65% of bachelor's degrees. However, while the stats are there, we don't always get to see representation of the college experience for women of color.

For the young, black girls who have been dreaming, studying, working, achieving, and breaking records, this recognition is fresh encouragement and inspiration. Work hard, and let the doors

open. Nevertheless, Yara and Malia's accomplishments have a powerful message about black women that people of all backgrounds should acknowledge:

We see others thriving. Why not us?

Originally published June 2017 for NO COMPROMISE MAGAZINE