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**&**  
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**Category: student in grades 9-12**

## **The Power Of Advocacy**

All over the world individuals are born with the potential to achieve their goals but sometimes they might not be strong enough to overcome these challenges by themselves. My sister, Alice and I have always known that education is important in order to succeed in life, therefore we take it seriously, and consistently work hard in school. We see education as a privilege rather than an obligation, because around the world many children (especially females) do not have this privilege.

When we first moved to the United States in March 2015, we had big dreams for our future but the fact that we could not communicate properly with people in school made our lives very difficult and also affected our academic progress and our enthusiasm to study. After a few months in the country, we met Blair Brettschneider, the CEO of Girl Forward, a program that advocates for female refugees in Chicago, and she made us feel welcomed. By advocating for us, Blair gave us confidence and showed us how much we are really worth. She would teach us about American culture and help us improve our English vocabulary.

When we had to move to Buffalo we met Mrs. Guerrero. Little did we know she would have such an impact on our lives. Since the first day we met Mrs. Guerrero, she showed us that she believed in us and gave us the courage to work harder in school. She dedicated a lot of time to helping us settle into our new school and with our homework assignments. We have a lot of potential, but we needed genuine people like Mrs. Guerrero and Blair to remind us of what

we are capable of. They made us realize that being in a different country and starting a new life has nothing to do with our ability to succeed.

Our dreams became more likely to be realized in the United States. Just like Mrs. Guerrero and Blair advocated for us, we've decided to do the same thing for underprivileged girls in Tanzania. We joined an organization called Girls Education Collaboration (G.E.C.). We know life in Africa can be tough, especially for girls, that is the main reason we decided to stand up for girls' education. The principal goal of this organization is to create and participate in fundraising events to build schools in the village of Kitenga. This initiative helps to raise people's awareness about the fate of these girls. Most of them do not get to choose their future because their parents prefer to marry their daughters to other families so they can get cows as dowries.

Altogether, people like Mrs. Guerrero and Blair inspired us to advocate for girls in Kitenga. They taught us that other people's assumptions should not affect us and what we are able to accomplish. We hope to continue to advocate for girls in Kitenga and make sure they always have the education they deserve, because we now know the power of advocacy.