

Speech Pieter de la Court Medals – by Rebecca Talbot

The jury consisted of Taco de Ruiter (Study Adviser Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology), Elsa Beukers (chair Study Association Emile), and Rebecca Talbot (chair, one of the medal winners last year).

Dear nominees,

I would like to share with you the deliberations of the jury.

We looked at the impact of your actions and whether they could inspire others; we checked that the student was not paid for the action; and of course we assessed whether it met one of Pieter de la Courts themes. This year we have had a lot of applications and I am delighted to tell you two of them stood out. And therefore, after hours of deliberating, we decided that Bram and Klara should win the Pieter de la Court medals this year. I will now clarify this decision.

Bram won this year's medal for Democratization and Entrepreneurship.

Bram is a valued member of the Westland Youth Council. In the position of vice-president, he is the voice of young people in local politics. One of the issues he puts his heart and soul into within his position is sustainability.

Litter is one of the problems Westland faces on a daily basis and Bram started his initiative on World Cleanup Day, involving the youth council and other young people in cleaning up the city. On another occasion he founded a group to clean up the beach. These actions made a major impact on his environment and that of sea life. His actions were intended to create awareness of and engagement in the much bigger problem of sustainability. The jury were impressed by the way Bram involved young people in his actions.

In addition, he writes position papers for the city council to make sure young people's voice is represented and heard. Even though Westland Youth Council is officially for local purposes, Bram held a survey to make sure he could speak for the young people of the Westland youth so that their needs are heard. On the basis of the results of this survey, he wrote a letter to the prime -minister concerning the position of young people during the covid-19 pandemic.

The jury were very impressed by Bram's actions. He is the glue between politicians, political decision-making, and young people themselves. Politics is often considered an old, male-dominated profession, and Bram single-handedly disproves this statement. He is an inspiration for all young people and students to get involved and ensure their voices are heard. And to think outside the box to improve our society.

I am therefore honoured to congratulate Bram, on behalf of the jury and secretary of the Pieter de la Court medal, for winning this medal.

Our other winner is Klara. Klara is one of the founders of the initiative Care Leiden. This initiative is a support group for victims of sexual violence. The jury are aware that sexual violence is still a taboo subject, which can make it very difficult for victims to find help and support, especially for

international students. This initiative is a bridge between the right care and support for victims of sexual violence. But also between international and Dutch students.

This initiative is open for everybody from Leiden University, including all genders. At every meeting there are either one or two licensed caregivers present to make sure the environment is truly a safe space. This contributes to the individual healing process and it creates an opportunity for building a community in which the topic of sexual violence is de-stigmatized. And in which survivors can support each other by sharing both struggles and coping mechanisms.

Even though the support group is low in members, the jury can see that the impact on survivors' lives is high. Sexual violence can lead to PTSD, intense feelings of guilt and shame, depression, and substance abuse. All these possible consequences have a high impact on the student's wellbeing and all other aspects of their life. Student wellbeing can therefore be positively influenced by this initiative, and help can be found before a student spirals down and drops out. Such initiatives are especially important at the moment, in light of the attacks on female students in the city center last winter and now in times of social isolation due to Corona, which is now known to lead to more violence. In relation to Corona, students who do not have a safe living environment have a higher risk of encountering sexual violence.

The jury were very impressed with the effort put into this initiative and hope that it can help more students who are struggling with the effects of sexual violence on their lives. This initiative makes the university more inclusive and safer. Klara leads by example, showing what it means to be an academic community, and this makes her an inspiration for all.

And therefore it is my honor to congratulate Klara, on behalf of the jury and secretary of the Pieter de la Court medal, on winning the medal for Inclusion and Entrepreneurship.