

Meet the 2022 Ralph Bunche Summer Institute Scholars

INDIA SIMMONS | PROGRAM ASSOCIATE, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PROGRAMS

The Ralph Bunche Summer Institute Program (RBSI) is an annual, intensive five-week program held at Duke University under the direction of Dr. Paula D. McClain. RBSI is designed to introduce undergraduate students from traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to the world of graduate study and to encourage application to political science PhD programs. This is the 36th year of the program. The 2022 institute was held May 29–June 30, 2022. Please join us in congratulating the 2022 scholars!

ARTURO JOEL AVILA ZAVALA

Arturo Joel Avila Zavala is a first-generation, rising senior at San Francisco State University and is majoring in political science with a minor in philosophy. Arturo has been a 3-time dean's list recipient, is CITI certified in Human Research under requirements set by the university and is STATA and Qualtrics proficient. At SFSU, Arturo has worked on community-based learning as a data analyst with experience in advanced survey design, implementation, and presentation; they are also currently working as a research assistant for the Bay Area Research Initiative (BARI). Their research interest includes comparative analyses regarding environmental policy and the viable, sustainable implementation of environmental justice within social policy to support historically marginalized communities that have been affected by the climate crisis. Arturo hopes to uplift the voices of the Latinx and queer communities within the field by providing a focus on intersectional identity and its correlation to politics and the environment in future post graduate projects and research.



NEELAM BANDHU

Neelam Bandhu is a first generation college student attending California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). She is double majoring in ethnic studies with a concentration in Asian American studies, and criminal



justice with a minor in political science. She upholds many responsibilities on campus that coincide with her involvement as President of Ethnic Studies Student Association. She is currently conducting research regarding K-12 education, higher education, education policies and more as a fellow for the Pathways Fellowship Program. Neelam has outstanding qualities that are showcased through her academic standing such as making the Dean's Honor List multiple times. She has demonstrated her dedication and commitment outside of her academics through various volunteer experiences and advocacy as a student lobbyist, activist, and scholar. She has presented herself as the face of ethnic studies at CSUS through an article that was published by the State Hornet on the fight for California Assembly Bill 1460. Neelam will be incorporating a student narrative through a future journal issue, AAPI Nexus, concerning the fight and implementation process for AB1460 at CSUS along with several plans she will be accomplishing throughout her academic career. Her research interest includes political rhetoric regarding minority communities and the consequences they face in addition to researching areas associated with international and comparative politics, policy, and leadership developments. Ultimately, Neelam's intention is to acquire as much experience as she can while strengthening her abilities as a student so she can further her education in a public policy doctoral program.

MORGAN-LEE BLAKE

Morgan-Lee Blake is a third-year student at Georgia State University studying political science. She is a member of the Honors College and has been a four-time Dean's List recipient and a one-time President's List recipient over the course of her college career. At Georgia State University, she has developed her research methods and writing skills by working as a research assistant in the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation-funded Humanities Inclusivity Program (HIP) at Georgia State University. Through this program, she has been able to assist Dr. Lakeyta Bonnette-Bailey in her current research, which focuses on the influence of political rap music on racial attitudes and the connection between Hip-Hop culture and social justice. Some of her research interests include the effect of capitalism on democracy, the politics of incarceration, the alt-right pipeline



and its real-life influences on American politics. After graduating, she hopes to further her education and pursue a doctoral degree in political science.

JOEL BOSSOUS

Joel Bossous is a third-year student at Georgetown University and a proud New Yorker. He is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree, double-majoring in government and Africana philosophy & diasporic studies—the latter of which is a major that he crafted himself. Before attending college, he was recognized as a national Coca-Cola Scholar and awarded a scholarship for achievement in leadership, academic excellence, and dedication to service. Joel was recently a member of the latest class of Idol Family Fellows and was selected to be part of Georgetown's Baker Scholars Program. During his high school career, Joel first became involved with a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth & College Division, and ERASE Racism, a non-profit advocacy organization based in New York. These groups continue to serve as a platform for empowering others and promoting equity, which Joel remains committed to advancing both within and without the classroom. He returned to ERASE last summer to assist in their impactful work and now sits on Georgetown NAACP's executive board. Joel is currently interested in pursuing a JD as part of a dual-degree program with hopes of growing as a leader, future educator, activist, and scholar.



political science, where he hopes to continue his academic work exploring populism. Additionally, while in graduate school, he plans to start a non-profit consulting organization targeted at helping those in communities of color with an interest in academia.

VERONICA GOMEZ

Veronica Gomez is a first-generation college student from South Central Los Angeles, California. She is a rising senior at Loyola Marymount University majoring in sociology and minoring in peace & justice studies and political science. On campus, she is involved in the First to Go Program as a peer instructor and student lead administrator. She is also a peer outreach assistant in the Ignacio Student Support Services, as well as being involved in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. Through the McNair Scholars Program, she has conducted research on college preparation programs for low-income high school students. Specifically, she studies a program called Upward Bound, and researches how family dynamics influence Latinx students' duration and participation in such programs. Veronica's research interests include a focus on racial and ethnic politics. She looks at the consequences of policies for underrepresented students, specifically disparities that low-income first-generation college students face in the education system. After graduating, Gomez intends to pursue a doctoral degree in political science and in public or educational policy. She eventually hopes to secure a position in government. Gomez is dedicated and passionate about creating change in underrepresented communities.



RYAN BROOKS

Ryan Brooks is a rising senior at Central Connecticut State University majoring in political science with a minor in philosophy. As an undergraduate, Ryan has consistently been recognized for his academic success on his school's Dean's and President's Lists. An avid writer, Ryan served as assistant news editor for Central's student newspaper for two years, writing critically on issues of social justice and other contemporary events. Following his passion for social justice, Ryan was selected from a competitive pool of applicants as an academic scholar for the John Lewis Institute for Social Justice at his school. Specifically, Ryan is interested in studying various aspects of populism in America and Western Europe. He is currently conducting research with Dr. Trevor Allen, exploring shifts in the political behavior of voters due to right-wing populist rhetoric. After graduation, Ryan intends to pursue a doctoral degree in po-



DEVIN GREEN

Devin Green is a junior at Johns Hopkins University studying political science. He is currently a research assistant in the P3 Lab at the Agora Institute, where he studies social movement theory and organization strategy. This work has given him experience writing literature reviews and coding qualitative data. Soon, Green will begin to work with organizers in Georgia to understand the inner workings of their operation as they existed during the 2020 election. He is also a research fellow at the student-led Vanguard Think Tank and writes bi-weekly analyses of current affairs in North America. Devin is a first-generation student and studied at community college before transferring to Hopkins. These experiences inform his interest in studying how we might empower vulnerable communities to participate in democracy.



ASSOCIATION

He hopes to pursue his PhD in political science after graduating from Hopkins to further explore questions of community building, strengthening democracy, and empowering those typically excluded from the democratic equation.

MASON HOLLAND

Mason Holland is a rising senior at the University of Connecticut majoring in political science with a minor in women's gender and sexuality studies. He is a part of the honors program and is a recipient of the Cohen Student Leadership for Enhancing Community in 2021. He currently serves as the Student Body President at UConn and has held a number of student leadership roles, such as President of the NAACP Chapter. While on campus, he has been an advocate for various student issues, including food insecurity and educational equity. His research interests include American politics and educational policy. Upon graduation, he intends to pursue a PhD in political science.



MICHELLE KAMARA

Michelle Kamara is a junior at Morgan State University studying political science. She is a third-year track and field student-athlete. She is on the Dean's list and is a three-time All-Academic Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference member. She has received several academic achievement awards, including the Residential Scholar Award, Athletic Scholar Award, and the Political Science Department Academic Award. She has also made the Athletic Director Honor Roll. She is the president of the Pre-Law Association, treasurer of the Muslim Student Union, an inducted Pi Sigma Alpha member, and an active member of the Political Science Association. She has conducted a group case study with the NFL where she was able to bring a law perspective to the field of geo-tracking. Michelle was raised in Coyah, Guinea, where she witnessed many injustices and human rights violations first-hand. Her experience in Guinea has influenced her interest in human rights law, and she aims to advocate for people who have suffered from injustices. She also aims to shed light on current human rights violations and protect the rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Michelle is currently researching the root causes of female genital mutilations in Guinea and their effects on young girls and women. She is also a volunteer for the International Refugee Committee Youth Program in Silver



Spring where she tutors refugee students. Post-graduation, Michelle aims to pursue a joint degree in international human rights law.

BLESSYN MARCELLE

Blessyn Marcelle is a first-generation rising senior at Temple University majoring in political science with a minor in criminal justice. She is also a member of the National Political Science Honor Society, Pi Sigma Alpha. Blessyn is passionate about gender politics, the backlash of neo-colonization, and following trends pertaining to the global economy. Her research objectives have been centered around class and gender conflict within the Middle East, the effects of globalization on the "developing" world, and critical race theory as it pertains to protest politics. She has conducted multiple surveys on campus safety at her North Philadelphia school and took part in research exploring trends in decolonization among the Caribbean and Latin American countries. Blessyn is honored to be a part of the RBSI and its objective of promoting students from backgrounds that are underrepresented in academia. After graduation, Blessyn plans on continuing with higher education by entering a dual JD/PhD program.



LILY SMITH

Lily Smith is a rising senior studying political science and history at Mercyhurst University in Erie, Pennsylvania. Lily is the incoming Mercyhurst Student Government President for the 2022-2023 school year and is the first ever Black female to be elected student government president in Mercyhurst history. A member of Black Students for Unity, Lily assisted with and spoke at the 2021 Mercy March for Black Lives held on campus. She also serves as the history club president and social media coordinator. Lily was one of a select number of public history students chosen to create a virtual tour of select sites included in "A Shared Heritage Tour, African Americans in Erie County: A Brief History." Lily has also facilitated several race discussions at Mercyhurst on books such as Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want To Talk About Race*. Off campus, Lily spent a semester volunteering and mentoring kids at the JFK Center after-school program with the Erie City School District. She is extremely passionate about improving education in urban areas, specifically for minorities. Her research interests include educational policy and social policy. After graduation, Lily hopes to pursue a master's in public administration.



WILLIAM D. TAYLOR

William D. Taylor is a rising senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he double majors in computer science and political science with a minor in data science. He currently works as an undergraduate research assistant with Dr. Frank Baumgartner, reshaping datasets used for statistical research on the death penalty. He also serves as the outreach coordinator for UNC Black in Technology, interfacing with companies and other campus organizations to provide opportunities for underrepresented STEM students. Before becoming a research assistant at Carolina, William participated in the National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates with the Security and Political Economy Lab at the University of Southern California. During this experience, he worked with a team of research assistants analyzing data and editing prose for projects on power sharing and police misconduct. He also held weekly office hours to assist his peers with issues in the R programming language. His research interests lie primarily within the field of methods—data collection and management, machine learning, mathematical modeling, and ethics. After graduation, William plans to pursue a PhD in political science, working with teams of scholars from interdisciplinary backgrounds to push the boundaries of computation in social science.



mance, particularly amongst K-12 students.

WAIDEEN WRIGHT

Waideen is a rising fourth-year at Tufts University and a Questbridge Scholar. She is studying anthropology and political science, tentatively on the pre-law track. She began her first semester at Tufts in a civic engagement program abroad, the Tufts Civic Semester in Perú, studying Spanish while learning from and working with indigenous Andean communities through an NGO. This experience inspired her to pursue civic engagement further, resulting in Waideen accepting a position as a Tufts Tisch Scholar where she works with non-profit organization MassINC to address transportation justice and create civic spaces alongside a supportive community of peers and educators. Waideen has also approached political science with an anthropological lens through journalism; she was one of ten student writers for the Student Dispatch at Tufts, an online political science publication focused on local inequities and policies in Massachusetts. Her research goals include a focus on the relationship between capitalism's effect on human habitus and the formation of US labor rights and social norms. Overall, Waideen is passionate about conducting research that analyzes historical processes both socially and economically to produce inclusive and equitable policy formation in all government sectors, especially in the US Department of Labor. ■

**MARTHA A. TYLER**

Martha A. Tyler is a rising senior at the College of William and Mary. She is currently pursuing a major in Japanese Studies and Government, with a focus in international relations. She has received the T.J. Paynter Scholarship, the J.G. Bohannon scholarship, and has been placed on her school's Dean's List. Through COVACCI, Virginia's cybersecurity initiative, she has conducted research on the role racial disparities have on racial terrorism. Her interest in societal imbalances carries over to her personal life, where she is an active participant in her college's Japanese Culture Association. Her other extracurriculars include Young Independents, an on-campus organization dedicated to non-partisan political discussion, and Diversity Fellows, a group dedicated to relaying diversity and inclusion infractions to Government Department faculty. Post-graduation, she aspires to enter a master's program for political psychology, where she aims to research the link between systemic racism and cultural attitudes towards academic perfor-

