

Meet the 2023-2024 Diversity Fellowship Program Spring Fellows

INDIA SIMMONS | PROGRAM MANAGER, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION PROGRAMS

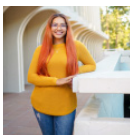
The APSA Diversity Fellowship Program, formerly the Minority Fellowship Program, was established in 1969 as a fellowship competition to diversify the political science profession. DFP provides support to students from underrepresented backgrounds applying to, or in the early stages of, a PhD program in political science. The goal of the program is to increase the number of scholars from minoritized backgrounds in the discipline and ultimately the professoriate. Please join us in congratulating the 2023-2024 class of fellows. Learn more about DFP at <https://apsanet.org/dfp>.

CARLOS AGUILERA



Carlos Aguilera is a PhD student in the department of political science at Howard University where he is currently a Just-Julian Research Fellow. At Howard University, he was previously a Frederick Douglass Scholar where he mentored and provided support to undergraduate students as a graduate student instructor. His fields of study include American government and international relations. His research focuses on the Supreme Court, constitutional law, and public opinion. Additionally, Carlos is exploring how Supreme Court decisions and public opinion coincide and the impact of decisions on underrepresented communities such as people of color, women, and individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Before pursuing his doctoral degree, Carlos received his BS in criminal justice and sociology from San Diego State University. He also graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Southern California with a Master of Public Administration. After completing his doctorate, Carlos looks forward to teaching the next generation of diverse-public sector leaders and promoting public policies that advance resources and services for underrepresented communities.

GIOVANNA ALCANTAR



Giovanna Alcantar is a doctoral student in the political science department at University of California, Irvine where she is currently a School of Social Science Fellow. Raised during immigrant rights movements and social justice protests in Southern California, she is determined to continue being an advocate of historically marginalized communities of color. Her research focuses on education, affect, and the influence of emotions and non-institutional political behavior on group identity, mobilization, and belonging.

AMBER COLQUHOUN

Amber Colquhoun is a first-year PhD student at the University of Maryland. Her subfields are American politics and methodology. Her research interests include race and ethnic politics, Black political behavior, public opinion, political participation, and political psychology. Currently, Amber is researching the internalizations of



negative racial stereotypes and the role of economic self-interest among affluent African Americans and its policy impacts on local redistributive policies. Before attending the University of Maryland, Amber graduated summa cum laude from Temple University with a BA in African American studies and psychology. Amber is originally from Brooklyn, New York, and her work's impetus comes from her lived experiences as a Black woman growing up in Brooklyn. After completing her doctoral degree, she plans to pursue a career in academia where she can continue to strengthen literature's understanding of the intricacies behind the political realities of African Americans and other marginalized communities.

JERON FENTON



Jeron Fenton is a second year PhD candidate in politics and social policy at Princeton University, where he also attained his BA in politics and political economy. His primary research interests are related to the Black church, Black immigrant identity, and Black political behavior. Jeron's current research project analyzes the relationship between Black church closures and voter turnout. He has published in the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* and is also a former Ralph Bunche Scholar. After completing his PhD, Jeron plans to pursue a career as an academic and champion of diversity and inclusion in higher education.

MARIANNA GARCIA



Marianna Garcia is a second-year PhD student at the University of California, San Diego. Her research interests focus on US immigrant politics and institutional inclusion. Her current project explores state legislative behavior, non-electoral incentives, and the support for pro-immigrant policies that expand the rights of undocumented individuals. In addition, Marianna is a research associate at NYU's Center for Social Media and Politics (CSMaP) where she focuses on the study of online misinformation, politics, and Latino communities. Her work has been featured in national outlets such as The Washington Post's Monkey Cage. Through her academic trajectory, she hopes to contribute to immigrant politics research and support students of color in their research and academic pursuits. Marianna holds a Master's in public policy, with a focus on social policy and programs, design and evaluation. Her research experience includes field research in California immigrant communities, survey design, ethnographic work, facilitating focus groups, and historical analysis.

IRENE GERRISH

Irene Gerrish (she/her) is earning her PhD in political science from Washington University in St. Louis (WUSTL). She earned her bach-

IRENE GERRISH (CON'T)

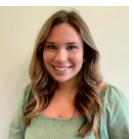
lor's degree in political science at Hope College (cum laude). During her college career, Irene worked for US Senator Debbie Stabenow (MI) as a tax intern and for US Senator Tom Udall (NM) as a state policy intern on issues pertaining to socioeconomic inequality. Before coming to WUJSTL, Irene spent 3 years as a high school math and special education teacher in Chicago with Teach For America. While she was a teacher, she also worked as a policy fellow with Advance Illinois, an education non-profit dedicated to advancing policy research on educational equity in urban and low-income school districts. Her research interests have been largely formed by her teaching career, which has led her to complete research on urban education policy and the lasting impacts of US slavery. Looking ahead, Irene plans to leverage her doctoral degree to teach, conduct research, and drive policy solutions that enhance educational outcomes for marginalized communities.

AUBREE HARDESTY

Aubree Hardesty (she/her) is a second-year PhD student at the University of Missouri studying American politics and public policy; she works as a teaching and research assistant while finishing her coursework. Aubree is also the recipient of the G. Ellsworth Huggins Fellowship. She previously earned her master's degree in Atlantic history and politics from the Kinder Institute. Her research pertains to political behavior and political psychology and specifically focuses on descriptive representation and voter turnout in the American context. Aubree's current projects analyze how voters' behavior and ballot choices are influenced by the demographic traits of candidates. This research is overseen by or coauthored with her advisor and political behaviorist, James Endersby. She aspires to insert elements of psychology in these projects. To do so, she participates in the Social Cognition of Social Change Lab, a psychology research lab at her university, led by Erin Hennes. Aubree hopes the conclusions of her research will encourage political minorities to turnout and run for office as well as motivate political institutions to diversify.

ANTONY JACKSON

Antony Jackson earned his BA in political science with minors in constitutional studies and philosophy from Utah Valley University and is currently a PhD student of political science in American politics at the Truman School of Government and Public Affairs. He is interested in researching the evolution of state constitutions in the Early American Republic era and broadly in American political development, American political and legal thought, political institutions, and public law during the Early Republic.

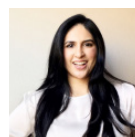
NATALIE JONES-KERWIN

Natalie Jones-Kerwin graduated from Iowa State University, with a summa cum laude distinction, with a bachelor of arts in political science in the spring of 2021. She is currently a second-year political science PhD student at the University of Wisconsin Madison where she studies American politics. Natalie is a proud tribal member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indian tribe. In April of 2022, Natalie was selected as a National Science Foundation Graduate Research fellow. Additionally, she has been awarded the SHEP American Indian Graduate Award for the years of 2021, 2022, and 2023. Her scholarly interests center around Native American political identity and behavior. In her most recent work,

pending publication, using original survey research she found that group consciousness plays a defining role in explaining intragroup variation for Native American non-tribal political behavior. In her current empirical research, she is interested in uncovering additional mechanisms that identify the relationship between Native American identity, and political behavior.

ALESHA LEWIS

Alesha Lewis is a first-year PhD student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She received her BA in psychology and political science from Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. As an undergraduate, she worked with Dr. Emily Sydnor and later became a fellow for the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute. She presented her work at the American Political Science Association's Annual Meeting in 2020. She was also a recipient of the Society for Political Methodology's Undergraduate Expansions Initiative and worked as a research assistant for Dr. Daniel Hopkins at the University of Pennsylvania. Currently, she works under the direction of Dr. Cara Wong and Dr. Jeffery Mondak. Her research focuses on the effects of racial trauma on political behavior for those in marginalized communities. Specifically, she uses both quantitative and qualitative methodology to determine how the emotions that stem from racial trauma can drive changes in political participation. In the future, Alesha hopes to pursue a career in academia, splitting her time between research and teaching classes on political psychology and race in the US.

SILKY JOSHI MALIK

Silky Joshi Malik is a doctoral student at in the department of political sciences studying American politics and public policy. Her research interests focus on questions at the intersection of feminism, gender, race and political behavior. Silky is a native Houstonian and a proud alum of the University of Houston. Graduating magna cum laude and with University Honors, she holds a dual bachelor's degree in sociology and psychology from the University of Houston, and a master's degree in business administration from West Texas A&M. In 2017, Silky was the first Indian American woman to run for the US House of Representatives in Texas' 2nd Congressional District; in 2020 she published a book detailing her run for office and experience as a political newcomer. Silky also co-hosts KPFT's weekly talk radio show, *Coming to America*, which explores the topic of immigration and other issues relevant to Houstonians.

REGINALD PULLEY

Reginald Pulley is a second-year PhD student at Georgia State University. Reginald was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, and earned his undergraduate degree at Catawba College in Salisbury, NC. In the fall, Reginald will be transferring to the University of Maryland to continue his PhD studies. Growing up in Baltimore, Reginald witnessed firsthand the impact of political decisions on communities of color. This experience fueled his interest in political science and motivated him to pursue higher education. Reginald has always been interested in understanding the unique political experiences of Black people in America. Reginald's research interest focuses on Black politics. He is particularly interested in exploring the factors that impact Black people's Black political ideologies and their evaluation of public policy outputs. Looking ahead, Reginald aspires to teach at the university level and continue his research on Black political ideologies and policy evaluation. Reginald is committed to

REGINALD PULLEY (CON'T)

using his scholarship to positively impact the world and advance the cause of racial justice and equality. He hopes to inspire and empower future scholars to critically examine political systems and work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

JOSEPH RODRIGUEZ

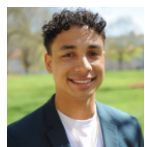
Joseph Rodriguez is a second year PhD student in the department of political science at Duke University. He received his BA in political science and philosophy from the University of California, Berkeley with highest honors. At Berkeley, he became interested in pursuing graduate school as a Ronald E. McNair Scholar.

His research interests as a PhD student lie broadly in normative political theory, democratic theory, and constitutional law. Currently, he is researching the rights of nature in the Constitution of Ecuador, exploring the normative and legal implications it raises. He plans to continue to study constitutional design in his graduate program and connect it to contemporary debates in democratic theory. He has previously served as a Junior Fellow with the Library of Congress, where he researched the legal history of the Marshall Court and its jurisprudence. After graduate school, he hopes to pursue a career in academia, researching and teaching political theory.

IVÁN RUIZ-HERNÁNDEZ

Iván Ruiz-Hernández is a second-year PhD student in the department of political science at Johns Hopkins University. His research interests include agricultural development, food sovereignty, and informal economies, especially concerning food systems in México and throughout Latin America. He is researching how smallholder farmers in Southern México make sense of their food systems.

Iván aims to understand how these communities' realities relate to formal regulation and the dynamics of informal and illicit economies. He received his BA in international affairs and his Master of international policy degree from the University of Georgia. Iván's graduate research focused on how the Fair Trade banana industry co-existed with food sovereignty in the Dominican Republic. At the University of Georgia, he co-founded SPIA Diversity, a forum to give underrepresented political science and international affairs students a community. Iván's future goals are motivated by the underlying values of community instilled in him by his family. He aspires to pursue a career in academia and join the growing waves of scholars committed to producing applied and representative knowledge.

KEVIN DESEAN RUSSELL

Kevin DeSean Russell is a second-year doctoral student and Centennial Scholar at Emory University in the department of political science. He received his BA in political science from Northwestern University, where he served as a research assistant and

Posner Fellow. He studies political behavior and racial and ethnic politics in the US. His current research, presented at NCOBPS, focuses on Black participation through financial contributions to political campaigns in recent elections. Russell is a first-generation college graduate who is interested in power dynamics involving marginalized groups—specifically, Black people. Other areas of interest include political leadership and social movements. He aspires to attain a tenure-track position at a university where he can continue studying racial politics and teach the next generation.

SONIA VARGAS

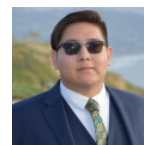
Sonia Vargas is a second-year PhD student at the University of Maryland in the department of government and politics. Her subfields are American politics and methodology. Her research interests focus on the political behavior and political social-

ization of individuals in the United States with immigrant parents, also called second-generation immigrants. Her current research is focused on avenues of political socialization in second-generation immigrant families, and how that may impact their partisanship. As a second-generation immigrant herself she is interested in producing more research on this growing demographic, especially as the United States will become a majority-minority country in the coming decades. She believes that this demographic holds power as its own constituency that has had unique politicizing experiences. Sonia has served as a research assistant, teaching assistant, and has had multiple service positions in her college at the University of Maryland. Before Maryland, she graduated magna cum laude from the University of Florida with a BA in political science and anthropology. After completing her PhD she hopes to pursue a career in academia where she can continue to develop and execute projects focusing on the second-generation and other minority groups.

DEBORA VILLALVAZO

Debora Villalvazo is currently a first-year PhD student at the University of California, San Diego, where she is specializing in American politics and methodology, with a focus on race and ethnic politics. Debora earned her BA in political science

from the University of California, Merced with double honors. Before starting the PhD program, she worked in local government and the legal consulting industry, where she partnered with grassroots organizations to conduct community research and helped start businesses in the Central Valley by advocating for favorable regulations and engaging with local decision-makers. Debora's research seeks to understand the role of formal institutions in shaping political violence in the United States and its broader implications for political behavior. Currently, she is working on a project investigating the effect of interactions between street-level bureaucrats and the public on political participation. After completing her PhD, Debora aspires to become a professor and advance her research while focusing on mentoring first-generation and underrepresented students.

ALEX RICHARD ZHAO

Alex Richard Zhao is a second year PhD student in the department of political science at the University of California San Diego. He is originally from Tiis Tsoh Sikaad Chapter of the Navajo Nation and graduated cum laude from the University of California

San Diego before starting his PhD program. Alex's research seeks to explain variation in Indigenous self-governance by studying the intricacies of Indigenous American political preferences, institutions, and geography. He is a member of UCSD's Race and Ethnic Politics (REP) lab, American Indian Graduate Student Alliance (AIGSA), and recipient of the Ford Predoctoral Fellowship. Alex is a proponent of benefitting the communities he investigates with his work while building empathy through the knowledge of Indigenous people. He often collaborates with Indigenous and non-Indigenous policy makers and researchers in the Navajo Nation and abroad. After earning his PhD, Alex aspires to continue research dedicated to servicing Indigenous populations by pursuing a position in academia. ■