

Meet the 2023 Ralph Bunche Summer Institute Scholars

INDIA SIMMONS | PROGRAM MANAGER, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, 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 to the world of doctoral study in political science those undergraduate students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups or those interested in broadening participation in political science and pursuing scholarship on issues affecting underrepresented groups or issues of tribal sovereignty and governance. This is the 37th year of the program. The 2023 institute was held May 28–June 29, 2023. Please join us in congratulating the 2023 scholars!

NIÉL JESUS ARROYO



Niél Jesus Arroyo is a rising senior at the University of Houston in Houston, Texas and formerly studied at Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Missouri. His odyssey as a Minister, first generation student, political science student, and community organizer are emblematic of his vocational pursuits in fields of civil rights, Black and Brown amelioration, and research. Arroyo is a cohort member of the Achievement Initiative for Marginalized Males and works alongside the university's Center for Diversity and Inclusion. Arroyo is a five-time recipient of the Dean's List honor, has served as Vice President of the BIPOC Student Support Group, the Executive Secretary for his preceding term, Public Relations Executive for the Student Organization of Latinos, a member of the Black Student Union, the InterVarsity fellowship, and has starred as a lead actor in films "6 Tapes" and "The Secret". Additionally, Arroyo co-hosted the university podcast, Rock-Cast, where he often discussed politics and current events. Arroyo has distinguished himself as an honoree of the following awards: Outstanding Support for Diversity, LGBTQ Alumni Association Fund, and Festival of Student Achievement Award. Arroyo's unwavering commitments to the study of race in the political science discipline have informed his pursuit for graduate level research.

GISELLE CONCEPCION



Giselle Concepcion is a junior at the Pennsylvania State University majoring in political science and minoring in women's studies and civic and community engagement. Giselle is a presidential scholar and DC Social Justice Fellow. She has received the Cahir Scholarship, Student Leadership Scholarship, Donald and Diane DiFrancesco Scholarship in Political Science, and the Academic Excellence Scholarship. She is a coder for the McCourtney Institutes Mood of the Nation Poll. She chairs the Committee on Governmental Affairs for UPUA, the undergraduate student government. She is also the co-founder and External President of the League of Women Voters at Penn State; her work with the League led to her serving as a

Membership and Equity Fellow of the Pennsylvania State League of Women Voters for two semesters. In addition to her work surrounding civic engagement on campus, she is a founding member of the Student Advisory Board on Student Poverty. She now serves as a Cahir Capitan for Students United Against Poverty. Giselle is interested in the cross-section of gender, politics, and American politics; Giselle hopes to pursue a master's degree in public policy and a JD degree post-graduation.

NAIMA DAWID



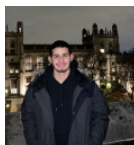
Naima Dawid is a student from St. Louis, Missouri; she is a three-time Dean's List recipient and recipient of the esteemed Sisters of Mary Mangan scholarship. She is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in international relations and international human rights at Webster University as a junior. Naima's current undertakings include working in collaboration with the Webster Global Student Leadership Summit in Leiden to effect institutional change at Webster through diverse leadership and serving as a research assistant at the Global Policy Horizons research lab, where she is engaged in comparative politics research, comparing China and Australia. As a first-generation Ethiopian-American, Naima has a keen interest in the integration of refugees and immigrants within the United States and advocates for adequate standards of living and opportunities for underrepresented groups. She is passionate about research that focuses on aiding and supporting marginalized groups, particularly those facing the effects of gentrification, such as housing and food insecurity. Her published work in *Writing Wrongs*, a human rights journal, titled "The Challenges of Black Women in US History," highlights her commitment to elevating the voices of black and brown people in the United States. Naima intends to pursue a PhD in political science to expand her influence on these critical topics.

AMITA DIARRA



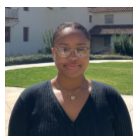
Amita Diarra is a rising four-year student majoring in political science and minoring in gender and sexuality studies as well as French and francophone studies at Pennsylvania State University. She is a member of the Schreyer Honors College as well as a Paterno Fellow and a Provost Scholar. Amita has consistently maintained her status on the Dean's List throughout her collegiate career. On-campus, Amita is a member of the Comparative Politics Research Group where she is currently a research assistant examining African parliamentary democracy portfolio allocation. She is also writing an honors thesis on the determinants of ethnic self-determination worldwide. After graduation, Amita plans on pursuing a doctoral degree in political science in order to become a political science researcher and professor. Her research interests include ethnic conflict, intra-state war, neoliberal econometrics, and gender and sexual inequalities.

JUSTIN FUNEZ



Justin Funez is a rising fourth year student at the University of Chicago, majoring in political science. This upcoming year he will also be pursuing an accelerated masters program in International Relations with the University of Chicago Committee on International Relations (CIR). On his campus, he currently serves as co-president for the Organization of Latin American Studies and is part of the Business Organization for Latino Development (BOLD), MoneyThink, and The Mark- a marketing consulting club, and works for the Center for Identity + Inclusion as an intern. He is interested in researching criminal group organizations in Latin America, as well as how maras work as transnational social groups within the US and Central America. Post-graduation, he hopes to continue researching criminal organized groups as social, communal, groups beyond just their violent networks. He also hopes to eventually pursue a PhD in political science.

SHAYONNA HULEY



Shayonna Huley is a first-generation student attending Channel Island State University. She is currently working towards a major in political science with a double minor in business and communications. On campus, Shayonna is seen upholding many responsibilities such as mentoring to first year peers as well as Black and African American students. Shayonna has also been a part of the Black Student Union board on campus for two years now, serving as the Officer of Social Marketing. On a wider scale, Shayonna has been the student coordinator for the annual Ebony Ball on campus, to celebrate and uplift black life. Shayonna has been exploring and developing her research skills with multiple professors on her campus. Currently she is working on coding county HR policy documents to analyze the accessibility for people with different neurotypes. Shayonna is planning to present her findings in her search at the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association this upcoming spring. After graduating Shayonna is planning to further her academic career by pursuing a doctoral degree in political science. She is passionate in her hopes to represent marginalized people groups and individuals through her own experiences and connections.

ALICIA LARTIGUE



Alicia Lartigue is a junior honor student at the University of Houston majoring in political science and minoring in law, values and policy, and global engagement. She is a recipient of the Terry Foundation Scholarship and the Mellon Research Scholars Fel-

lowship and has been named on the Dean's List. Alicia is a member of the Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honor Society and has been an ambassador for the Women's Gender Resource Center at her university and a mentor for her scholarship. Alicia has always been interested in the people in power who make decisions that affect everyone, which influenced her decision to major in political science. However, she noticed that most of these people were men and belonged to the same social class, and had little in common with the rest of society and herself. This realization sparked her research interest which concerns women's policy and minority representation in our government. Her ultimate goal is to help advance the women's movement to increase gender and minority representation in our branches of government. After graduation, Alicia is planning to pursue a joint JD/PhD degree.

EMILY MARTINEZ



Emily Martinez is a rising senior at William Paterson University. She is a political science major with minors in legal studies and philosophy. Emily is a member of the Honors college and their student intern where she assists in organizing civic engagement events. She is a part of the Honors Social Sciences Research Track where she is conducting research on political extremism in Generation Z. Emily is Vice President of Academic Affairs in Student Government where she serves as the liaison between faculty and students to resolve academic issues and concerns. She is the current treasurer for Phi Theta Sigma Honors Law Fraternity, a research assistant, and a five-time Dean's list recipient. Emily hopes to expand her research on Generation Z's political attitudes in the future as well as conduct research on Afro-Latinx voting patterns, moral relativity in the American judicial system, and study the predictions of early political theorists on future societies. She hopes to gain a multi-cultural perspective for her research by studying abroad in the Fall and eventually moving abroad to study different political systems and societies. Upon graduation, Emily plans to pursue a doctorate in political theory. She has a passion for theoretical research and hopes to diversify this field of study.

LAURA MENDEZ-PINTO



Laura Mendez-Pinto is a rising senior at the University of Maryland (UMD). She is an Honors student in the College of Behavioral and Social Science and a member of the Latin American Studies Certificate Program. She is also an inducted member of Pi Sigma Alpha. Laura has focused her undergraduate scholarship on Latin American studies, ethnic politics, behavioral science and computational social science. She has worked as an undergraduate teaching assistant, and as a member of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee for the Government and Politics department. As a research scholar for UMD's Summer Research Initiative, she began her research experience with the Interdisciplinary Lab for Computational Social Science (iLCSS), studying neurological and psychological reactions to politicized content. Laura now works with the lab under the guidance of iLCSS director, Dr. Ernesto Calvo. Laura is CITI Certified in Responsible Social and Behavioral Research and is Qualtrics and R proficient. Some of her research interests include Indigenous political mobilization in Latin America, online political communication, misinformation propagation, and electoral behavior. After graduating, Laura intends on furthering her education by pursuing a doctoral degree in political science.

ABIGAIL RANGEL



Abigail Rangel is a first-generation college student from rural northern California. She is a rising senior at the University of California, Berkeley majoring in political science, specializing in American politics. As an undergraduate, she is currently working on research tackling democratic backsliding domestically and abroad. Abigail is involved in several on-campus clubs championing advocacy and inclusion for Latinx, Queer, and undocumented communities. Outside of school, Abigail is involved in reproductive justice advocacy and activism; she helps connect unserved communities with essential reproductive care, creates youth-led social justice spaces for POC in her community, and lobbies on behalf of reproductive justice-centered legislation. As a first-generation Mexican-American from a low-income rural background, Abigail's re-

ABIGAIL RANGEL (CONT')

search interests are colored by her lived experiences. Her research interests include exploring the linkage between capitalism and the rise of radicalization, the importance of indigenous and Latinx communities in the American polity, and the impacts of climate change on political behavior. She plans to further her education and pursue a doctoral degree in political science after graduation.

SOPHIA ROJO



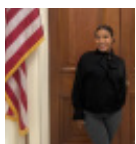
Sophia Rojo is a rising fourth year at Arizona State University. She is a member of the honors college studying global studies with a minor in sustainability and French. She is a four-time Dean's Lists recipient, and a New American Scholar. She was a part of the Junior Fellows Program her second year aiding Dr. Margaret Hanson in writing a literature review about collective action within authoritarian regimes. Her next semester, she was a Barrett Honors Fellow again working with Professor Hanson where she gained working knowledge of R studio and political statistics, learning to analyze survey data regarding women's rights in South Korea. This experience inspired a passion project, a research paper regarding the perceived versus reported levels of economic inequality in South Korea, utilizing survey data collected by Dr. Young-Im Lee. She is currently in Aix-en-Provence, France studying French at Sciences-Po-Aix University and is a teaching assistant within the School of Global and Political Studies pilot Online Undergraduate Research Scholars (OURS) program demystifying the research process for online students who often do not have these opportunities as a result of only working online. Sophia hopes to pursue a doctoral degree in political science and work as a professor or political science data analyst.

SEVASTIAN SANCHEZ



Sevastian Sanchez is a rising senior and a first-generation college student studying international relations and public policy at New York University. His research interests include political secession, democratization, and foreign sustainability policy. He is particularly motivated by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which drive his research on sustainable public transportation and his work at Invest NYC SDG, a multi-year initiative that steers investment into inclusive and sustainable SDG projects in NYC. As a member of their FoodMap NY research team, Sevastian conducts qualitative research to help address food insecurity in New York State. Sevastian has also worked under house representatives and has experience presenting on a wide range of policy issues to leaders of various policy sectors after being selected to participate in the NYU 2022 Public Service Summer Institute fellowship program. As an NYU Amnesty working group leader, Sevastian has organized events to raise awareness about environmental justice and health equity issues. An aspiring researcher in sustainable development, Sevastian seeks to institutionalize greater collective responsibility for uplifting historically disadvantaged groups and combating climate change through an interdisciplinary PhD program in political economy.

SYNIA TAITT



Synia Taitt is a rising senior at Howard University, majoring in political science with a minor in women's gender and sexuality studies. She is a proud New Yorker, multiple time Dean's List recipient, a member of Howard University's NAACP, and member of The

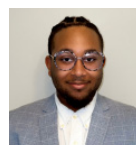
National Political Science Honor Society also known as Pi Sigma Alpha. Synia has a devotion to social Justice and is a consistent advocate for race and gender equality, educational equality, healthcare, and police reform. This passion can be seen in her avid work as a legislative intern on Capitol Hill through both sides of Congress. In her sophomore year of college Synia had the opportunity to work, learn and excel under US Senator Cory A. Booker (D-NJ) in the 117th Congress. In her junior year, she has had the honor to work under Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke (NY-09) with interest specifically in the areas of Black Women and Girls and The Congressional Black Caucus in the 118th Congress. Her research objectives have been focused on the intersections of politics and policies and how they impact Black urban communities. Specifically, she would like to study policing, police reform, and local government politics and their connection to policing and police budgets. After graduation, Synia intends to continue her education by obtaining a dual JD/PhD degree. With her degrees, Synia hopes to make an impact in furthering policy that intends to empower and improve the Black community.

ENELY TURBI ALVAREZ



Enely Turbi Alvarez is a first-generation student at Amherst College. She is from New York City and proudly represents the Bronx. Enely is a political science and religion double major. She is currently on the executive board for Amherst's Latinx affinity group as the first-ever Afro-Latinx chair. In this role, Enely facilitates spaces like La Platica, through which Latinx students engage in conversation about the community and their identities. Enely has also served on Amherst's Antiracism Committee, representing La Causa. This committee is composed of other affinity leaders and President Ellio, who meet biweekly to discuss the college's collaboration and support of affinity spaces and marginalized students on campus. This past year, Enely has conducted research with Professor Austin Sarat that observed the death penalty during pandemics and wars. This project aimed to look at capital punishment as an institution and how it is affected in times of crisis. Enely's academic interests include systems of power as they pertain to religious groups and punitive institutions in the United States. She hopes to use her research and experiences within Amherst and her community in New York to facilitate change for those at the margin of racial and class oppression.

NYIHAJI WOODS



Nyihaji Woods is a first-generation rising senior at Howard University. His desire to understand the roles race and class play in the development and implementation of public policy led Nyihaji to major in political science. He was motivated by the study of ethics to add a second major, philosophy, his sophomore year. Throughout his academic career, Nyihaji has been a three-time Dean's List academic achievement award recipient. He has also served as associate editor for Howard University's political review journal, *The Liberato*. Nyihaji's engagements with Washington natives has influenced his decision to study public policy, as well. His research interests include the long-term effects of the expansion of the American interstate highway system on marginalized communities and housing and homelessness policy in the United States. He hopes to leverage his understanding of ethics to the field of political science. After graduating from Howard University, Nyihaji plans on pursuing a Master of Public Policy with a focus on urban policy. ■