

# Meet the 2017 APSA RBSI Scholars

The Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI) is an annual five-week program designed to introduce undergraduate students from under represented racial/ethnic groups or students interested in broadening participation in political science and pursuing scholarship on issues affecting under-represented groups to the world of graduate study and to encourage application to PhD programs. This is the 31st year of RBSI excellence! The 2017 RBSI program, held at Duke University, runs from May 28-June 29, 2017.

## SYDNEY CARR

**Sydney Carr** is a student in the honors program at the University of Connecticut, majoring in political science and minoring in Africana studies. Sydney currently serves



as the president of the University of Connecticut's chapter of the National Council of Negro Women, as well as a College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Senator in the undergraduate student govern-

ment. As a dean's list scholar, Sydney has had a wide range of research and internship experiences. In her most recent role, she served as a congressional intern in the United States House of Representatives in the office of representative Rosa L. DeLauro (NM). Additionally, she conducted research last summer at Michigan State University under the guidance of Corwin Smidt on a project that examined voters' attitudes toward female political candidates. Sydney's research interests include the representation of women and minorities in politics, with a specific focus on African American women political candidates and elected officials. Sydney has presented her research findings at conferences and symposiums, including the 2016 Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists and the 2016 Michigan State University Mid-SURE Research Symposium. After her graduation, Sydney plans to enter into a dual-degree JD-PhD program that will allow her to merge her interests in political science and Africana studies.

## REBECCA GONZALEZ

**Rebecca Gonzalez** is an honors student studying political science at Temple University. Interested in global affairs, Rebecca serves as the president of Model United Nations



at Temple University, and is currently working as a programs intern at the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia where she conducts research to help develop the Organization's programs. She is a recipi-

ent of the merit-based Jessie Marie Watkins Scholarship, and has participated as a panelist for TU TV's aired series, *Race in the Race 2016*. Expanding her professional and personal growth, she has directly interviewed and hired colleagues in her position as student coordinator of the Office of Orientation and New Student Family Programs. Appointed as the liaison to the parliament for Temple Student Government, and serving as strategist and manager of multiple student government campaigns, her leadership experience is considerable. Rebecca's research interests are rooted in defending minority rights and ending inequality through intercultural dialogue and education. In the future, she hopes to earn a doctoral degree in political science and pursue a career in transnational advocacy and international relations.

## KAMRI HUDGINS

**Kamri Hudgins** is a third year student at the University of Michigan with honors. Her majors include political science and African American studies with a minor in criminal



justice. Throughout her college career, Kamri has developed a strong interest in the criminal justice system. She has done research in the area of mass incarceration and other aspects of the criminal justice

system. Along with her scholastic endeavors, Kamri has a strong passion for mentorship and volunteering. By developing a mentoring organization that caters to young African American girls in middle school and volunteering at a group home for teen girls,

Kamri is able to effectively give back to her community and encourage young girls to pursue a college education and develop skills that are crucial to their matriculation into adulthood. Upon her graduation in 2018 she plans to pursue a dual degree (PhD in political science and a JD with a focus on criminal law). In the future she aspires to advocate on behalf of oppressed groups and become a law professor. This will allow for the development of ground breaking research to assist in the fight for political, economic, and social equality for historically oppressed groups.

## JOAN JOSEPH

**Joan Joseph** is a student at Florida State University (FSU), pursuing a dual degree in political science and statistics, along with minors in mathematics and computational science.



She has recently completed the Research-Intensive Bachelor's Certificate in political science at FSU where she conducted empirical research in comparative politics which focused on comparative political

corruption. Her current research aims to flesh out patterns of democratization and introduce Haiti as a case that can inform our understanding of the racially charged context of colonialism, as well as its impacts on future development and democratic consolidation. As a Social Science Scholar, a FSU program for distinguished social science majors, Joan has received grants to conduct archival research and trace the progression of democratic consolidation in postcolonial Haiti by probing colonial period political and administrative systems present in historical and oral narratives. Upon graduation, Joan plans to pursue a MS in mathematical statistics, and then a PhD in political science with subfields in comparative politics and political methodology.

## KANGKANA KOLI

**Kangkana Koli** is a student at Eastern Michigan University majoring in political science with minors in public law and government and Asian studies. She has a strong passion for social justice issues, and advocating for change at her school.



She serves as vice president of her university's mock trial team, the director of social justice for student government, a political science tutor, and director of special events for college democrats.

Beyond her campus and community engagement positions, Kangkana places a great amount of importance on academic research related to topics about developing countries and the immigrant experience in America. She is a presenter on the topic of religious extremism in developing countries at the 2017 Eastern Michigan University Undergraduate Symposium and is working on a senior thesis on this topic. She plans to pursue this research in her graduate studies in the hopes that she can contribute to the formation of a positive relationship between the United States and its international counterparts, as well as advocate for immigration policy reform in the United States.

#### MONIQUE NEWTON

**Monique Newton** is a student at Oberlin College double majoring in politics and law and society with a minor in Africana studies. As a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Research Fellow at Oberlin College, she is currently working on a research project that examines the relationship between African Americans and the government through an analysis of African American political participation. Her project is titled "Myths vs. Reality: Uncovering the Causes of African American Voter Turnout in the United States." She has also conducted research for a member of Boston City Council on a potential policy that guarantees state housing for citizens who have just been released from jail or prison. Her overall research interests include African American voting behavior and the affect public policy has on disadvantaged groups in the United States. In addition to her research, she has served for two years as a member of the student finance committee, a seven-student committee that allocates 1.3 million dollars from the student activity fund to student organizations. In the future she plans to pursue a doctoral degree in political science.



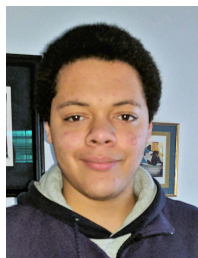
#### PAMELA ORTEGA

**Pamela Ortega** is a double major in journalism and political science at the University of Oklahoma. A McNair scholar, her research focuses on religion and politics, specifically a comparison of political behaviors between Mennonite communities in Mexico and the United States. She is currently a research assistant for a project on the 1977 Oklahoma Girl Scout Murders. Pam has presented her research on severe weather vulnerabilities in Spanish speaking communities at the American Meteorological Society Conference and the Oklahoma Service Learning Conference. She covered the 2016 presidential election for the *Huffington Post* and reported on voting rights with News 21. She cofounded the Roosevelt Institute, a think tank at her school. Pam is currently a ProPublica emerging reporter, reporter for *Oklahoma Routes* and a member of Pi Sigma Alpha. She hopes to earn a doctoral degree in political science and teach.



#### PRESTON PARRISH

**Preston Parrish** is an international affairs major at the University of Cincinnati (UC), and is working toward certificates in security studies and international human rights. As well as being on the dean's list, he is a scholar under the McNair program and the Minority Empowerment Initiative Trust; and is currently serving as the President of UC's Arabic Language Club. Preston has worked under Tom Carroll, City Manager for the Village of Silverton, as well as assisted in research on the implications of clandestine operations under Dr. Brendan Green at UC. Preston's current research involves the social and economic impact of refugee resettlement in Cincinnati. In the future, he is interested in looking at the connections between liberalism and realism, as well as exploring the balance between freedom and security within American politics and how that dichotomy plays out through the various cultures across the country. Preston plans to go to graduate school to pursue a PhD.



#### DIANA PAVON

**Diana Pavon** is a student at the University of Wisconsin–Madison majoring in political science and Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies with a minor Chicana@ and Latin@ studies. Diana's campus involvement includes serving as the cochair for La Mujer Latina, a student organization that creates an annual conference with resources for all the Madison community. She has gotten politically involved as an undergraduate intern for both senator Tammy Baldwin and representative Jocasta Zamarripa which allowed her access to the inner-workings of the political sphere. Diana has previously conducted research for the Labor Historical Society in Madison that is developing an educational map website. She is also an open advocate against social injustice, and she hopes to address these issues in her community. Diana has won the Jesus Salas Activist Scholarship for serving as an advocate in her Latino community as well. Last summer, Diana was awarded the University of Wisconsin Global Getaway due to high academic achievement and accomplishments. As a result, she was able to travel to Rio de Janeiro where she became educated about Brazil's government and international law. In the future, she hopes to educate marginalized students about social inequalities and become involved in political campaigns.



#### AVERY D. PEARL

**Avery D. Pearl** is a student at Augustana College, in Rock Island, Illinois majoring in political science and Africana studies. Vice president of his college's NAACP chapter, Avery has worked to improve the social life of all disenfranchised people on campus and create an environment which embodies diversity and inclusion. He is the president of his campus's Multicultural Men's Association, works on the college president's Student Advisory Council, on his institution's Sexual Health and Violence Prevention Committee, and has created multiple workshops focused on perspective and diversity. Within



his community, Avery has coordinated panels on diversity, participated in voter registration drives, worked on political campaigns, and enacted programs such as youth library card registration days in impoverished communities. Avery is a firm advocate for those who are disenfranchised, who feel as though they have no voice.

**ANDRE ROSS**

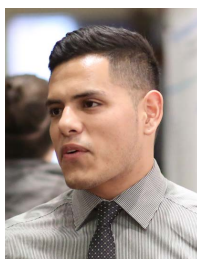
**Andre Ross** is a student at the University of Houston. After a career in business that spans for over a decade, he is currently majoring in political science with an emphasis on law and the effects of democratization. Andre is also currently interning at Outreach Strategists, a political consulting and public relations firm in Houston, Texas. He helps this firm connect



needful communities with various resources. He has been an active member of clubs on campus such as UH Democrats and Phi Alpha Delta. His research interests have emphasized ways to observe how domestic and international legal institutions impact minority communities within the United States and developing countries across the globe. Andre is implementing work with Fe y Justicia Worker Center, an organization committed to fighting human trafficking. In the future, Andre has plans to develop several research topics including the management of poverty and mass incarceration in the United States, political economy of Latin America and Africa, and the development of authoritarian regimes. His ultimate goal is to become a professor while maintaining a role in exploring ideas that help develop underprivileged communities.

**RODOLFO SOLIS**

**Rodolfo Solis** is a native of Pharr, Texas and is currently a third year student at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. At Wabash, he is majoring in both political science and Spanish with a specialization in American politics and international relations. During his sophomore year, he was elected as president for a student organization, known as Unidos Por San-



gre which serves to represent the Latino population among the student body. His area of research interest is on migration, both internal and external. Rodolfo, therefore, assessed the relationship between drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs) and migration trends while he participated in the NSF-REU program. He presented his results for the NSF-REU project at the 75th annual MPSA conference program in April 2017. At the moment, he is coauthoring an encyclopedia entry for a forthcoming book, *Latinos in the US Political System: An Encyclopedia of Latinos as Voters, Candidates, and Office Holders*. In the future, Rodolfo plans to pursue a doctoral degree in political science with a focus on immigration and, ultimately, teach at the collegiate level.

**ASIA STEWART**

**Asia Stewart** is a junior at Harvard University, currently pursuing a joint concentration in government and women, gender, and sexuality studies and a secondary in



ethnicity, migration, rights. After working at the New York State Division of Human Rights and the internationally recognized organization, Physicians for Human Rights, Asia identified her growing interest in notions of sexual citizenship and belonging, diaspora, and queer migration. In search of ways to enact social change through the mechanism of the law, Asia began to conduct research on asylum law and US immigration policies at the Harvard Center for American Political Studies in 2016. Currently, her research specifically focuses on the legal barriers that LGBT asylum seekers face in the United States. She is particularly interested in the effect that various performances of gender and sexuality in the courtroom have upon asylum case outcomes. In the future, Asia hopes to attend law school and later defend the rights of those most marginalized in society.

**ANGIE TORRES**

**Angie Torres** is a student at the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando, Florida, majoring in international and global studies with a minor in global peace and security studies. Her research interests focus on gender studies, international security, and developing nations. Angie



currently serves on the vice president's Student Advisory Council and is a CREAM Futuros Peer Mentor, a program supported by the Hispanic Federation that focuses on

promoting Hispanic student success, along with three other organizations on campus. In her spare time, Angie teaches students in her community as a substitute teacher. She actively participates in volunteer events and went to Santa Catarina Barahona, Guatemala during spring break to assist "Small Change 4 Big Change," an organization focused on sustainable health and education to promote rural community development. Angie also does extensive research on women's roles and development as the Central and South America Intern for the Global Perspectives Office at UCF. She is a research assistant working with Jonathan Powell on the effects on women after major conflicts in certain Latin American countries and will conduct original independent research through UCF's Honors in the Major program this fall. Upon graduation, she plans to earn her PhD in political science and teach at the university level.

**ERICA WHEELER**

**Erica Wheeler** is a student at the University of Louisville where she is majoring in political science and minoring in Pan-African studies. Erica is passionate about studying



and researching politics and race, particularly regarding black and Latino communities. Recently, she completed an independent study on mass incarceration in America, discovering a pattern of contributing factors that led to the devastating increase. Erica is a Woodford R. Porter scholar whose scholastic performance has placed her on the dean's list. She works in the Office of Admissions as an admissions volunteer who introduces prospective high school students to the University of Louisville. Upon graduation, Erica plans to pursue a doctoral degree in political science where she plans to produce and publish research that will influence policy-makers and legislation impacting race and social justice in a career as a university professor. ■