Presenting the 2014-2015 MCCA LMJ Scholarship Program Recipients*

Taifha Baker – MCCA Scholar
Georgetown University School of Law

Taifha Natalee Baker graduated magna cum laude with a B.S. in legal studies in 2012 from St. John’s University in Queens, New York. Ms. Baker’s interest in the law arose when she was exposed to the injustices taking place in her low-income, high-crime neighborhood in Jamaica, New York. Baker is a first year law student at Georgetown University School of Law and is interested in providing legal counsel in the areas of employment and insurance law. She is also interested in diversifying the legal field to extinguish stereotypes that may lead to injustices within the legal profession.

Aldel ML. Brown – Microsoft Scholar
Harvard Law School

Aldel Brown is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Howard University where he earned a B.A. in history. Prior to graduating from Howard, Brown cofounded Shining Stars Montessori Academy Public Charter School during his sophomore year, while maintaining employment from the United States House of Representatives and then later the United States Department of Justice. Immediately upon graduation, Brown was appointed by the board of trustees to serve as the school’s executive director. As the son of Jamaican immigrants, Brown aspires to provide counsel in the areas of education, criminal and real estate law. Brown is a currently a J.D. candidate at Harvard Law School.

Frances R. Ha – MCCA Scholar
Boston College School of Law

Frances Ha graduated with a B.A. in political science in 2012 from the University of California, San Diego. While teaching at a migrant school in an industrial neighborhood in Shanghai, her interest in the importance of a child’s right and access to education and the justice system was shaped. She also worked in the self-help center at the Superior Court of California in San Diego and learned the importance of diversity in the legal profession in terms of understanding the cultural needs of the clients. She is currently a first-year law student at the Boston College School of Law.
Jiali Huang – MCCA Scholar
Yeshiva University School of Law

Jiali (Keli) Huang graduated cum laude from SUNY Binghamton with a B.A. in philosophy, politics and law and three minors in business, Chinese, and global studies. She is the first of her family to attend college and law school. Prior to attending law school, she served as a legal support analyst at the New York State Office of the Attorney General, where she became interested in securities and enforcement. Ms. Huang is currently a first-year law student at Yeshiva University School of Law.

Ke’Andra N. Levingston – Chevron Scholar
Harvard Law School

Ke’Andra Levingston graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in English from Spelman College in 2014. Her passion for advocacy was sparked by high school debate and continued during her time as a Spelman College Social Justice Fellow. While at Spelman, Levingston tutored writing and was actively involved in the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel Assistants Program. She also participated in pre-law summer experiences at Suffolk and Harvard Law Schools. Levingston is currently a first year student at Harvard Law School and hopes to study racial health disparities, mass incarceration and intellectual property.

Maya A. McKenzie – MCCA Scholar
Georgetown University School of Law

Maya Alexandria McKenzie graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in political science from Alabama State University in 2013. Since working on her first political campaign at an early age in her hometown of Sylacauga, Alabama, she has been actively involved in voter registration and education efforts. While a student at ASU, she worked as a research assistant in Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder. Later, McKenzie organized the “No Vote, No Voice” campaign, a voter registration effort accompanied by seminars on new voter identification laws and civic engagement that reached over 2,000 students. She was most recently a legal fellow at Munger, Tolles & Olson, LLP in Los Angeles. McKenzie is a first year law student at Georgetown University School of Law and interested in providing legal counsel to television and film distributors to eventually increase the distribution of independent films with diverse characters to aid in social change in the Southeast United States.
Maybelline Mena-Hadyka – Microsoft Scholar
New York University School of Law

Maybelline Mena-Hadyka graduated with special distinction as a Phi Beta Kappa Scholar with a B.A. in peace and conflict studies and a minor in ethnic studies from the University of California, Berkeley. During her time as an undergraduate, she was a campus student ambassador and a JusticeCorps legal intern at the Alameda County Superior Court. Following graduation, Mena-Hadyka served as a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) Public Policy Fellow in Washington, DC, where she worked at the U.S. State Department and on Capitol Hill in Congressman Xavier Becerra’s office. She was also a Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO) Corporate Law Intern at O’Melveny & Myers LLP in New York City. She expects to work in litigation in the law firm arena and in the long term hopes to use her law degree to work toward helping disadvantaged communities gain access to corporate and political platforms where their needs can be voiced. Mena-Hadyka, currently a first-year law student, is an AnBryce Scholar at New York University School of Law.

Suman K. Momin – MCCA Scholar
Duke University School of Law

Suman Momin graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in international affairs from the University of Georgia. As the first in her family to complete high school and college and to attend law school, Momin holds a strong interest in advocating for the universal right to education and in empowering immigrants to obtain an education to take steps in improving their livelihoods. She has served as a GED tutor and works within the Muslim community to help immigrants stride toward these goals. After law school, she hopes to become a corporate attorney. Momin is currently a first-year student at Duke University School of Law.

Pamela E.U. Nwaoko – Microsoft Scholar
Harvard Law School

Pamela E. U. Nwaoko, born in Newark and raised in Irvington, New Jersey, currently studies as a 1L at Harvard Law School. Prior to embarking upon her legal career, she received her M.Sc. in African studies from the University of Oxford where, via an exposé on vigilantism, she explored how the brutal killing of four university students vicariously represented young people’s narratives of vulnerability, victimhood and exclusion in Nigeria. She immediately put her knowledge to work as an intern with the United States Agency for International Development’s Africa Bureau in Washington, D.C. Youth advocacy was also a top priority for Nwaoko as an undergraduate at Georgetown University. There, she acted as a mentor for local DC students, for which, together with her academic prowess, Glamour Magazine honored her as a Top Ten College Woman. After graduating magna cum laude, Nwaoko worked as a litigation paralegal with a large firm in New York and Washington, D.C. Appreciative of the long hours and intensive work, she learned of the diligence and detail required to solve top-tier legal issues. Nwaoko prioritizes visits to Africa and hopes to help pioneer more U.S. corporate firms to engage in business with emerging markets.
Victor A. Salcedo – Nationwide Scholar
Harvard Law School

Victor Salcedo graduated magna cum laude from UCLA with a double B.A. in political science and Chicana/o studies. He is currently a first-year student at Harvard Law School. Salcedo’s parents were both unaccompanied, undocumented child immigrants from Mexico who continuously inspired him to reach his dreams. His experience working at Compton Courthouse and his involvement with UCLA Law Fellows encouraged him to pursue a law degree and advocate for low-income communities, especially ones where prevalent violence alienates community members. As a first-generation college graduate, Salcedo hopes to inspire other minority students to pursue higher education and help diversify the legal field.

Farzeen Tariq – Walmart Scholar
Northwestern University School of Law

Farzeen Tariq graduated magna cum laude from Lake Forest College with a B.A in international relations and then studied international law at University of Oxford, where she also presented her research on the future of public international law. As a native of Pakistan, Tariq desired to play a role in empowering women in Pakistan and therefore founded a non-governmental organization called POWER (Project for Women’s Empowerment and Rights) in Islamabad that promotes women’s health, education and legal awareness through volunteers and support from other non-profit organizations. Tariq also worked as a marketing and business analyst at Chicago Sun-Times, where the fast-paced contract negotiations, defamation cases and labor union activities sparked her interest in corporate law. She is a first-year law student at Northwestern University School of Law, where she is also the elected president of class of 2017 at the Student Bar Association. Tariq feels strongly about the power of law in bringing social change and will contribute to ACLU’s Juvenile Detention Youth Interview program, and raises awareness of legal issues such as employment discrimination in Chicago Public Schools through her involvement in Street Law.

Syeda N. Tasnim – MCCA Scholar
New York University School of Law

Syeda Nazifa Tasnim graduated magna cum laude, with a B.A. & honors in international relations and a B.A. in economics, in 2014 from Mount Holyoke College. She was born and raised in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and she was inspired to study law when she witnessed the power of advocacy at a pro bono law firm and women’s shelter in her native city. Tasnim is currently a first-year law student at New York University School of Law and she is interested in working on women empowerment.
Delvin S. Turner – MCCA Scholar  
University of California – Los Angeles, School of Law

Delvin Turner is a cum laude graduate of La Salle University, where he majored in English and philosophy. Born in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, PA, Turner is the first in his immediate family to graduate from college and to attend law school. His experiences of growing up poor and otherwise disadvantaged motivated him to serve underserved populations. After college, Turner served as a youth counselor at a non-profit agency in his old community, where he helped low-income teenagers graduate from high school and enroll in college or obtain meaningful employment. Turner intends to use his law degree to be of service to his clients and the broader legal community as a litigator. He is currently a first-year student at UCLA School of Law, where he is enrolled in both the David J. Epstein Program in public interest law and policy and the critical race studies program.

Sohayl Vafai – Robert Half Scholar  
University of California – Berkley, School of Law

Sohayl Vafai received his B.A., summa cum laude, in English language and literature from the University of Maryland, College Park. He started attending college at the age of 14 and has received numerous awards from the University of Maryland, College Park, including the Most Distinguished Record in English Award, the Joseph Houppert Memorial Prize for Best Paper on Shakespeare, and the Sara Ann Soper English Award for Commitment to Community Service. After college, Vafai worked for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as a paralegal specialist where he researched legislative histories and case law in a variety of litigation matters, including those involving imports, drug approvals and denials, and good manufacturing practices. He is a first-year law student at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law (Boalt Hall). Vafai is interested in practicing in the areas of intellectual property, health, and food and drug law. He is a first-generation Iranian-American whose parents immigrated to America during the Iranian Revolution.

Rachel Velasquez – PitneyBowes Scholar  
Vanderbilt University School of Law

Rachel Velasquez graduated cum laude from American University with a B.A. in international relations. Prior to law school she worked as legislative aide to United States Sen. Michael Bennet and had a policy portfolio that included judicial affairs, Latino affairs, technology and transportation. She was part of the policy team that drafted the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, also referred to as the immigration reform bill that passed the Senate in June 2013. She is currently a first-year law student at Vanderbilt University School of Law.