DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

# Diversity & Inclusion Alumni Accomplishments and Updates

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

APSA congratulates the following APSA Diversity and Inclusion Program Alumni on their recent accomplishments and updates. The list includes news of academic program admissions; dissertation defenses; academic, administrative, and non-academic job appointments; publications; promotions; and other professional updates. To learn more about APSA Diversity and Inclusion Programs, visit us online at https://apsanet.org/DIVERSITY/Diversity-and-Inclusion-Programs.

**Iris Acquarone** (FLS 2023), a presidential postdoctoral fellow at Arizona State University, accepted a new assistant professor position in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University, starting in Fall 2026. She also co-authored "District Magnitude, Black Political Empowerment, and Candidate Emergence" in *Electoral Studies 101*.

**KEY:**
**D/MFP** = Diversity/Minority Fellowship Program
**FLS** = Fund for Latino Scholarship
**RBSI** = Ralph Bunche Summer Institute
**ARG** = Advancing Research Grants for Early Career Scholars or Indigenous Politics

**Mariam Al-khafaji** (DFP 2026-27), an incoming PhD student at American University (SPA), completed her master's in public administration at Virginia Commonwealth University with a 4.0 and earned the "Outstanding Scholar" award in her program at the Wilder School. During her MA, she served as a 2025 ASPA Founders' Fellow, a 2025 APPAM Equity and Inclusion Fellow, and a fellow with the Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE).

**Austin Barraza** (MFP 2019-20, FLS 2022), an assistant professor at San Diego Mesa College, successfully defended his dissertation and earned his PhD in political science from Northeastern University.

**Nadia Brown** (RBSI 2003), professor of government and Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Georgetown University, along with Paru Shah, recently published "An Intersectional Analysis of Violence against Women Political Leaders in New Jersey" with the Center for Politics and Race in America at Rutgers University and "The Canary in the Coal Mine: An Intersectional Analysis of Mayoral Leadership and Political Violence in the Aftermath of COVID-19" in *Political Research Quarterly*.

**Savannah Carr-Wilson** (ARG 2025), a PhD candidate at Duke University, received two grants (the Duke Dissertation Research Travel Award: Domestic and the Institute for Humane Studies Fellowship Grant) and presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

**Mel Fillmore** (ARG 2022), assistant professor of Sovereignty, Governance and Policy at the University of Oklahoma, defended their 2024 dissertation, "Redefining Missing in the Third Space of Sovereignty," earning a PhD in public policy and administration from Boise State University. In fall 2024, they were hired by the University of Oklahoma's Department of Native American Studies to lead the sovereignty and governance portion of the program. They also co-authored "Assessing the scope of missing indigenous persons in Idaho" in *Race and Justice*. Fillmore was awarded a 10K seed grant from the University of Oklahoma's Data Institute for Societal Challenges (DISC) to develop a public-facing database for Oklahoma Missing Persons, scheduled for release in May 2026.

**Wellinthon Garcia** (RBSI 2003), assistant director of Leadership & Student Support Services at PNW BOCES, wrote a children's book, *Tio & Tio: The Ring Bearers*, published by Penguin Random House.

**Takiyah Harper-Shipman** (ARG 2022), an associate professor at Davidson College, has a forthcoming book, *Unruly Fertility: Race, Development, and Decolonial Reproductive Politics*, published by Stanford University Press and scheduled for release on July 7th.

**Akayla Henson** (DFP 2025-26), a PhD student at the University of Illinois, received the A. Belden Fields Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching from the University of Illinois Department of Political Science.

**Kiara Hernandez** (DFP 2020-21), a PhD candidate at Harvard University, defended her dissertation in May and will join the Center for Political Economy (Work and Labor Idea Lab) at Columbia University as a Postdoctoral Research Scholar.

**Lydia Ayame Hiraide** (ARG 2025), a lecturer at Soka University, recently published her first monograph with Routledge: *Intersectionality and Environmental Movements: British Activism in Global Context.*



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**Rikio Inouye** (MFP 2020-21), a PhD candidate at Princeton University, will defend his dissertation in July 2026 and has accepted a tenure-track position at Temple University starting in 2027. Before starting, he will complete a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation. He has also published two articles in *International Studies Quarterly*.

**Sekou Jabateh** (DFP 2024-25), a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley, has had his first paper, "Interethnic Monetary Transfers and Cooperation: Experimental Evidence from Post-Conflict Liberia" (co-authored with Dr. Joan Barcelo), conditionally accepted for publication in the *American Political Science Review*.

**Jenn Jackson** (MFP 2016-17, ARG 2021, 2024), an assistant professor at Syracuse University, will have their book, *Policing Blackness: How Threat Shapes Black Politics*, released in early 2027 by Cornell University Press. Additionally, their article, "Intersectional Threat: How Race, Gender, and Sexuality Shape Black Americans' Perspectives on Policing," was accepted by *The Journal of Politics* and will be published in October 2026.

**Kamalani Johnson** (ARG 2025), a postdoctoral research associate at Brown University, completed his PhD in political science at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He accepted a 2026–2027 postdoctoral fellowship as a postdoctoral research associate in Gender and Sexuality Studies at Brown University's Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women. This summer, he will also serve as a 2026 fellow at the Institute for Critical Social Inquiry (ICSI) at The New School. He was recently awarded the 2026 Biography Prize by the Center for Biographical Research at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and the 2026 Law and Humanities Junior Scholar Award.

**Joaquin Lopez-Huertas** (ARG 2025), a PhD student at the University of Utah, defended his dissertation and spoke at the 2026 College of Planning + Architecture Convocation.

**Julia Marin Hellwege** (FLS 2020), an associate professor at the University of South Dakota, was named the inaugural Diane Jones Meier Distinguished Professor in Gender and Public Policy for 2026-2029.

**Yalidy Matos** (RBSI 2008, MFP 2009-10, FLS 2012), an associate professor at Rutgers University, published a new book, *Politics in Our Veins: The Rise of Dominican American Political Power in the United States*, with Domingo Morel and Michelle Bueno Vásquez.

**Taneisha Means** (RBSI 2008, MFP 2009-2010), an associate professor at Vassar, published her first book: *Robed Representatives: How Black Judges Advocate in American Courts* (Stanford University Press, February 2026).

**Vanessa Navarro Rodríguez** (RBSI 2018, ARG 2023), an assistant professor at the University of Colorado, Denver, completed her PhD in political science at UC Berkeley.

**Austin Nelson** (MFP 2018-19), an assistant professor at the University of South Carolina, recently completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan Law School and accepted a tenure-track assistant professorship at the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law.

**Zoila Ponce de León** (FLS 2013, 2015) accepted a position as assistant professor of public policy at the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. Her first solo-authored book, *The Politics of Healthcare Expansion: Policy Reform and Political Parties in Latin America*, is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press. She also has a new article forthcoming: "Immigration and Deportation Attitudes: Sexuality, Economic Contributions, and Respondents' Partisanship," with Gabriele Magni, in *International Migration Review*.

**Olivia Porter** (DFP 2026-27), an incoming PhD student at Brown University, will graduate with an MA in philosophy from Stanford University in June 2026.

**Mariana V. Ramirez Bustamante** (FLS 2023) became a postdoctoral researcher at CenMAS–Center for Multidisciplinary Area Studies, Charles University, Faculty of Arts.

**Andrew Ratcliff** (RBSI 2026), an undergraduate student at Morehouse College, was a Spring 2026 Inductee to Pi Sigma Alpha and received the Spring 2026 Honor Roll at Morehouse College.

**Sherlean Roberts** (DFP 2024-25), a graduate student at the University of Iowa, presented research at ISA Midwest 2025, completed her MA in political science, was awarded a Pre-Comprehensive Exam fellowship for Summer 2026, and participated in the ICPSR Summer Program training in 2025.

**Pearl Robinson** (MFP 1970), a professor at Tufts University, was interviewed with CP Scholars, "Pathbreaking Women in Comparative Politics, Pearl Robinson," in the APSA Comparative Politics Newsletter, Spring 2026, pp. 30-39. She was also interviewed for "Pearl Robinson on Embracing the Unexpected and Crossing Continents," in Governance Uncovered: Episode 73-A Podcast by GLD (the Governance and Local Development Institute at the University of Gothenburg and supported by the Swedish Research Council).

**Sofia Rosales** (DFP 2024-25), a PhD student at Michigan State University, passed her comprehensive exams and advanced to candidacy; received the Julian Samora Endowed Scholarship ($2,000), the MSU Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation Graduate fellowship ($5,000), and the Early Start Research Award; served as a keynote speaker for the Michigan Hispanic/Latino Commission Statewide Post-Secondary Graduation Ceremony; and was accepted to the Policy Research Institute for Equity Conference (PRIEC) and the 2026 APSA Annual Meeting.

**Pablo Scuticchio** (ARG 2025), a PhD candidate at Cornell University, published a paper in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

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**Althea Sircar** (ARG 2024), assistant professor of political science at the University of Redlands, received the Arnold L. and Lois S. Graves Award in the Humanities (Recognizing Early-Career Faculty in California, Oregon, and Washington) from the ACLS/Pomona College in 2025. She was also named a 2025-2026 Mellon Emerging Faculty Leader by the Institute for Citizens and Scholars.

**Rodolfo Solis** (RBSI 2017, MFP 2018-19, FLS 2021), PhD candidate at UCLA, had their co-authored article, "Ideological Sorting Helps Explain the Galvanization of Latino Republicans in Contemporary US Politics: Qualitative Evidence From In-Depth Interviews," accepted for publication in *Political Research Quarterly*.

**Be Stone** (APSA Committee on the Status of LGBT Individuals, current member), assistant professor at Rhodes College, recently published "What Does Addiction Mean in US Policy Debates? A Case Study of the 'Welfare Addict,'" in *New Political Science*.

**Alice Timken** (APSA Committee on the Status of LGBT Individuals Travel Grant 2021), assistant professor at Gettysburg College, defended their dissertation and earned their PhD from Syracuse University in May 2026. Alice accepted a new position as assistant professor of political science at Gettysburg College and has a new publication, "Ideology and judicial independence: who undermines high courts in democracies?" in *Democratization*.

**Angie Torres-Beltran** (RBSI 2017, MFP 2018-19, FLS 2023), assistant professor at the University of Arizona, received the 2025 Adaljiza Sosa-Riddell Mentoring Award for Graduate Student Mentoring. She also published the following co-authored work: "Women politicians reduce violence against women: evidence from Mexico" in *Political Science Research and Methods*; and "Volunteer for whom? Local and direct preferences for civic engagement with women's organizations" in *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.

**Sonia Vargas** (DFP 2023-24, FLS 2025), PhD candidate at the University of Maryland, will defend her dissertation on July 10 and start as a postdoc at UT San Antonio this fall.

**Chantal Walker** (ARG 2025) accepted a part-time adjunct position teaching history courses at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento.

**Betina Wilkinson** (MFP 2008), associate professor at Wake Forest University, will serve as the Associate Dean of Faculty Development and Belonging in the Office of the Dean of the College at Wake Forest University starting July 1, 2026.

**Rochelle Williams** (RBSI 2025), incoming PhD student at Georgetown University, graduated summa cum laude from Pepperdine University with a bachelor's degree in political science and a minor in journalism.

**Kenicia Wright** (ARG 2023), assistant professor at Arizona State University, has three recent publications: "Pathways for Social Equity: An Audit of Bureaucratic Representation, Diversity, and Cultural Competency in Florida Nursing Homes" in *Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration*; "They are Hiding the Truth and Plotting: Conspiracy Beliefs Among Latinos," in *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*; and "The (Not So) Angry Black Woman: How Emotions Influence Political Participation of Black Women," forthcoming in *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*.

**Joanna Wuest** (ARG 2021), assistant professor at Stony Brook University, received the following: Honorable Mention for the 2025 APSA Charles Taylor Book Award; an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) fellowship, 2026-2027; a Louisville Institute Grant for Researchers, 2026-2027; and a Mid-Career fellowship at the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, University at Buffalo Law School, 2027. She also published "Exposing the Gender Identity Industry: Anti-Gender and the Paranoid Critique of Trans Medicine" in *Signs 51* and "Evidence and Expertise in Trans Health Law" in *Boston University Law Review*.

**Rafael Xucuru-Kariri** (ARG 2024), postdoc at the Federal University of Bahia, received the Best Dissertation Award in Sociology in Brazil (2024); the Best Dissertation Award in the Humanities in Brazil (2024); a one-year postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of International Development at King's College London (2025); and organized the exhibition "Indigenous Letters to Brazil" at the Brazilian Supreme Federal Court (2026).

**Jasmine Yarish** (ARG 2022), assistant professor of political science at the University of the District of Columbia, was promoted to associate professor with tenure, starting October 1, 2026, and has three forthcoming publications: "Sculpting International Affairs in the Nineteenth Century: Edmonia Lewis and the Centennial Exposition of 1878" in *The Contributions of Black Women in International Affairs*; "Abolition Democracy in and out of Philadelphia" in *Reading Black Reconstruction Today*; and "Review of Black Scare/Red Scare: Theorizing Capitalist Racism in the United States by Charisse Burden-Stelly."

**Kelebogile Zvobgo** (ARG 2020), Mansfield associate professor of government at William & Mary, published two books in 2026: *Governing Truth: NGOs and the Politics of Transitional Justice*, published by Oxford University Press, and *Innovations in Human Rights: Concepts, Data, and Measurement* (co-edited with Francesca Parente), published by Edward Elgar Publishing.■


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