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American Bar Foundation Welcomes 2018 Montgomery Summer Research Diversity Fellows

Chicago, June 1, 2018 — The American Bar Foundation (ABF) has selected four exemplary undergraduate students as the 2018 recipients of the Montgomery Summer Research Diversity Fellowship (SRDF) in Law and Social Science. The 2018 fellows were selected from a highly competitive group of over 200 applicants and have demonstrated excellence in their undergraduate careers. This year's fellows are Erick Aguilar, Leilanie Martinez, Rebecca Lei and Wesley Chen.

The ABF offers a rich environment to students from diverse backgrounds who are considering careers in legal research or the practice of law. Each fellow works closely with a specially designated ABF Research Professor on the design and implementation of a research project, affording them the rare opportunity to do socio-legal research with experienced scholars. While the students work primarily as research assistants, they also attend a series of seminars conducted by ABF faculty, program alumni, and practitioners in the legal system in Chicago, who acquaint the students with their research and work.

Many SRDF alumni go on to pursue academic careers in the social sciences and law, careers as legal practitioners, or work in government, social policy or business. The fellowship has produced many notable alumni, including Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar, a 1992 SRDF alumnus who is now a Justice of the California Supreme Court. Cuéllar was also named a potential nominee for an appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016. Another notable alumnus, Danielle Holley-Walker, currently serves as the dean of Howard University School of Law. Dean Holley-Walker will be honored by the ABF in October as the recipient of the inaugural Montgomery Summer Research Diversity Fellowship Distinguished Alumnus Award.

“We are delighted to welcome a new cohort of Montgomery Fellows to the ABF and Chicago this summer,” said Ajay K. Mehrotra, ABF Executive Director. “The ABF has been a leader, through this fellowship and similar programs, in building the pipeline of diverse legal professionals and aspiring scholars. In fact, we will be celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of this fellowship program this fall, and we look forward to continuing this tradition many more years into the future.”

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About the 2018 Montgomery Summer Research Diversity Fellows:



Erick Aguilar, of Mount Olive, North Carolina, is a rising senior at Duke University majoring in Migration Geographies of Undocumented Labor as a Benjamin N. Duke Scholar and Point Scholar. He is interested in the intersection of immigration, globalization, and labor rights. Through his major, he studies how the geography of Central American migration to the U.S. is shaped by Frontera Sur, a Mexican policy enacted in 2014. Aguilar is president of Duke's Individualized Majors Union, a first-generation mentor, and a community engager with Latino's in the Deep South, where he has

programmed events on helping low-income and undocumented people get access to HIV-prevention medication and care. He has worked as a Spanish instructor and field trip coordinator with Plantersville Summer Academy (a summer program for underprivileged students), an advisory intern with Ernst & Young, and has volunteered in Mexico City with La Casa Tochan, a refuge home for Central American migrants in the U.S. He hopes to pursue a J.D./Ph.D. in human geography and will work with ABF Research Professor Jothie Rajah during his summer fellowship.



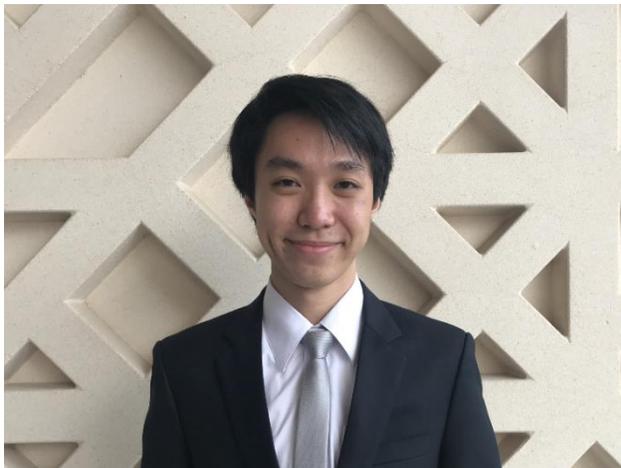
Leilanie Martinez, of Los Angeles, California, is a graduating senior from the University of California, Berkeley majoring in legal studies and Chicana studies. She is a self-described *feminista* who helps to empower women of color through her work as a senior resident assistant, Girl Scout co-troop leader, and researcher. Martinez is a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow and studies rights mobilization, issues of inequality, and access to justice. Her current research project explores how women of color facing evictions mobilize their housing rights using legal aid resources. She is an advocate for increased legal aid and volunteers at a community non-profit called Bay Area Legal Aid, where she works on furthering housing justice and reentry services. Martinez hopes to pursue a joint

J.D. and Ph.D. in sociology of law to study issues of inequality and access to justice and will work with ABF Director Emeritus Robert Nelson during her summer fellowship.



Rebecca Lei, of Alhambra, California, is a rising senior at the University of California, Berkeley pursuing a B.A. in legal studies. She is interested in the intersection between law and the social sciences, particularly constitutional law and the experiences of minority groups within the legal system. Lei served as an AmeriCorps member in the Bay Area Division of JusticeCorps in 2016 working to improve access to justice by assisting self-represented litigants in minority and low-income communities. She is an active member of Berkeley's Chinese Student Association and a research assistant in the Department of Legal Studies. She has also worked in her hometown community as a writing

tutor at East Los Angeles College and volunteered at the Superior Courts of Los Angeles. In Spring 2018, she lived for a semester abroad in Rome, where she studied the political and sociological complexities of Roman society. Lei hopes to pursue a J.D. in law and will work with ABF Executive Director and Research Professor Ajay Mehrotra during her summer fellowship.



Wesley Chen, of Old Bridge, New Jersey, is a rising junior at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service majoring in international politics and pursuing a B.S. in foreign service and a certificate in American studies. He is interested in international law, foreign policy, economics, global migration, and the impact of the judicial system on democracy. He is currently working on a thesis focused on the counter-majoritarian difficulty in the U.S. Last year, he served as a research assistant to Professor Uday Chandra at Georgetown's Center for International and Regional Studies and studied comparative perspectives on

populism and fascism in democratic politics with a focus on contemporary India. At Georgetown, he has participated in Model United Nations and the Honor Council and served as an undergraduate teaching assistant and tutor. Last summer, Chen traveled to the Greek island of Lesbos as part of a service trip, where he assisted Syrian refugees. He hopes to pursue a J.D. to further his study in international law and will work with ABF Research Professor Terrence Halliday during his summer fellowship.



The Montgomery Summer Research Diversity Fellowship in Law and Social Science is supported by generous grants from the [National Science Foundation](#), Kenneth F. & Harle G. Montgomery Foundation, [Law School Admission Council](#), and [AT&T](#).

About the American Bar Foundation

The [American Bar Foundation](#) (ABF) is among the world's leading research institutes for the empirical and interdisciplinary study of law. The ABF seeks to expand knowledge and advance justice through innovative, interdisciplinary, and rigorous empirical research on law, legal processes, and legal institutions. To further this mission, the ABF will produce timely, cutting-edge research of the highest quality to inform and guide the legal profession, the academy, and society in the United States and internationally. The ABF's primary funding is provided by the [American Bar Endowment](#) and the [Fellows of The American Bar Foundation](#).