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The American Bar Foundation Announces 2020-2021 Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Fellows

CHICAGO, August 24, 2020 -The American Bar Foundation (ABF) has awarded four emerging scholars its 2020-21 doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships. Amber Joy Powell, Kumar Ramanathan, Christopher Mathis, and Charquia Wright will begin their fellowships with the ABF in September 2020.

The ABF offers several distinct fellowship opportunities to foster the next generation of scholars engaging in original and significant research in law, social science, and higher education. ABF fellowships include: the [ABF Doctoral Fellowship in Law and Inequality](#), to encourage original and significant empirical and interdisciplinary research on the study of law and inequality; a doctoral fellowship co-sponsored with [Northwestern University](#) (NU), the [ABF/NU Doctoral Fellowship](#), to encourage original and innovative research on law, the legal profession, and legal institutions; and the ABF/AccessLex Institute [Doctoral](#) and [Post-Doctoral](#) Fellowship in Legal and Higher Education, which is co-sponsored with [AccessLex Institute](#) to assist emerging scholars who research issues of access, affordability or value in legal and higher education.

The ABF selected four scholars from a highly competitive applicant pool. Their fellowships are as follows:

- **Amber Joy Powell:** the ABF Doctoral Fellowship in Law and Inequality
- **Kumar Ramanathan:** the ABF/Northwestern University Doctoral Fellowship
- **Christopher Mathis:** the ABF/AccessLex Institute Doctoral Fellowship in Legal and Higher Education
- **Charquia Wright:** the ABF/AccessLex Institute Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Legal and Higher Education

Doctoral and post-doctoral fellows participate in the ABF's interdisciplinary research community by participating in a weekly seminar series with leading scholars from around the country, and by contributing to workshops and discussions with other fellows. They also work closely with ABF faculty and other scholars, who serve as mentors helping to guide and direct their research. The fellowship program also seeks to identify and mentor emerging scholars from underrepresented backgrounds and groups. Program alumni have moved on to promising careers as tenure track professors, legal practitioners, and social science researchers.

“We look forward to welcoming our newest cohort of outstanding doctoral and postdoctoral fellows,” said ABF Executive Director Ajay K. Mehrotra. “With the help of partners like AccessLex, Northwestern University, and the National Science Foundation, we are excited to continue to mentor the next generation of empirical and interdisciplinary sociolegal scholars.”

About the ABF’s 2020-2021 Doctoral Fellows:



Amber Joy Powell is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota. Her current research centers on the sociology of law, punishment, and gender-based violence across race, gender, age, and sexuality. Drawing upon semi-structured interviews and documented legal grievances, Amber’s dissertation, “Hidden in Plain Sight: A Qualitative Look at Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Detention,” explores how formerly incarcerated young adults, youth justice advocates, and youth correctional personnel interpret and respond to sexual victimization in youth detention. Her project unearths how law and legal institutions may simultaneously produce and conceal violence within organizational contexts. Amber has also served as

a sexual assault victim advocate and a graduate student collaborator for the University of Minnesota’s Committee of the President’s Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct (PIPSM). She received her B.A. in Criminology and Law Studies at Marquette University and her M.A. in Sociology at the University of Minnesota. Amber is also a proud alumnus of TRIO and the McNair Scholars Program. She is a regular contributor to The Society Pages and has published work in *Gender & Society* and *The New Handbook of Political Sociology*.



Kumar Ramanathan is a doctoral candidate in political science at Northwestern University. His dissertation, “Building a Civil Rights Agenda: The Democratic Party and the Origins of Racial Liberalism,” investigates how liberal politicians in northern Democratic Party contested and constructed a civil rights legislative agenda during the 1930s-60s, and aims to explain the origins and limitations of racial liberalism as it emerged among these party elites. His secondary research agenda examines the impact of civil rights law and policy on the politics of social policy after the 1960s, including an extended case study on the development of family and medical leave policy. Besides these historical projects, Kumar is broadly interested in how significant

developments in law and public policy shape political behavior, which is reflected in collaborative research on immigrant political participation and urban politics. At Northwestern, Kumar is affiliated with the Comparative Historical Social Sciences Working Group, the Program in Legal Studies, and the Chicago Democracy Project. He received his B.A. in political science and philosophy from Tufts University.

www.KumarRamanathan.com.



Christopher Mathis is a doctoral candidate in higher education at the University of Virginia, where he is a Southern Region Education Board Pre-Doctoral Fellow and a Graduate Fellow in the Center for the Study of Race, Education and Law. His research is focused on the intersection of law and higher education, with a particular emphasis on utilizing social science methods in the study of legal education. His three-paper dissertation, "Papers on reimagining legal education," explores how legal education would look different by reimagining 1) the U.S. Supreme Court's discourse on affirmative action, 2) legal education focus on ethical and moral development, and 3) the ranking of law schools. Christopher's scholarship has been presented and published across several conferences and journals. Christopher received his B.S. in Mathematics from Oakwood University in 2014 and his J.D. from the University of South Carolina in 2017. During his doctoral studies, Christopher worked with the Southern Education Foundation in Atlanta, GA, where he helped design equity centered programs, policies, and efforts for colleges and universities to adopt. As a law student, Christopher was on the Editorial Board for the South Carolina's Journal of Law and Education and President of the Matthew J. Perry Black Law Students Association.



Charquia Wright holds a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center and an L.L.M. from UCLA School of Law. Her research interrogates the ways in which racial hierarchies are produced, reproduced, and neutralized within law school classrooms. It further analyzes how the relationship between racial hierarchies and the legal classroom are negotiated by Supreme Court jurisprudence. Prior to completing her L.L.M, Charquia researched Brazilian police brutality as a Fulbright scholar and litigated voting rights issues across the U.S. Her work has appeared on UCLA Law Journal's Law Meets World forum and in the Georgetown Immigration Law Journal. Prior to law school, she received a B.S.E. in Operations Research and Financial Engineering from Princeton University.

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. An independent, nonprofit organization for more than 65 years, 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](#).