

## **About the Authors**

**Aqsa Ahmed** is a 21-year-old, first generation, Pakistani American Muslim studying law at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. She is pursuing a Political Science degree with a double minor in Anthropology and Sociology. Her academic interests include immigration policy, criminal law, and the impact of systemic inequality on marginalized communities. Her paper, *Immigration Raids and Family Separations in the U.S. Border*, examines how immigration enforcement has become increasingly criminalized and how these policies harm children and families. She wrote this to raise awareness about the human and emotional consequences of family separation and to highlight the need for more humane, community-based solutions. She plans to attend law school and pursue a career advocating for justice and policy reform.

**Veronica Agard (Ifáşadùn Fásanmí) (she/her)** is a poet, writer, community educator, and connector at the intersections of Black identity, wellness, representation, and culture. She curated the Who Heals the Healer series and the conference of the same name, and facilitates the Ancestors in Training™ educational project. A joy defender and space holder for over 10 years, she wants to be remembered as a force of nature who created sites of healing. Veronica's debut book, *Ancestors in Training: An Abòrişà's Guide to Lineage Work, Healing Praxis, and Black Diasporic Memory*, is out next year with North Atlantic Books.

**Xytara Astaphan** is a Caribbean American writer and third-year criminology student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Her writing is rooted in emotion, identity, and the experience of growing up as a first-generation Caribbean woman. She often explores themes of mental health, love, culture and self-discovery, using her words as a way to give voice to feelings that are often left unspoken. For Xytara, writing is more than an assignment; it is a form of release, reflection, and healing. This is her first publication, and she hopes to continue creating work that not only tells stories, but allows others to feel seen, understood, and connected.

**Madison S. Blount** is double majoring for BA in Criminal Justice Studies as well as a BA in Psychology. She will be graduating Spring 2026

**KimNgan Diep** is a postbaccalaureate scholar at San Francisco State University. KimNgan earned a BA in Criminal Justice Studies and will soon receive an MA in International Relations.

**Liberty Dixon** is a second year undergraduate student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice studying Political Science and Sociology. Having been born to a family with a long history of military and intelligence careers, she has discovered an affinity for breaking down the patriotic ideology that the United States instills

in its citizens. In a passionate effort to address the state of education and truth, Dixon explores anti-intellectualism and its impact on marginalized communities in the States—her first publication of what she hopes to be many. In the words of James Bladwin: “I love America more than any other country in the world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually.”

**Fiona Engstad** is a student at San Francisco State University, majoring in Psychology, Criminal Justice, and Political Science. Fiona also works as an intern at Project Rebound and as a mental healthcare professional at Mind Therapy Clinic. Fiona plans to apply principles of psychology in order to make positive change within law and government policy.

**Florian Griese** is a critical criminologist studying criminology, psychology, interdisciplinary studies, gender studies and economics at John Jay College in New York City. She specializes in state crimes, police misconduct, war crimes, Palestine, the influence of colonial and neo-colonial structures and the capitalist mode of production on crime and society, prison abolition and alternatives to the current approaches of the criminal legal system. For the future, she aims to further her economics studies and to create interdisciplinary knowledge beyond the limitations of the narrow approach of singular academic fields.

**Allen Jiang** is a sophomore at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, majoring in Sociology and minoring in Economics and Spanish Legal Translation. His first publication, “How the Privatization of Carceral Systems Perpetuates Mass Incarceration,” inspired by Angela Y. Davis’ book, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, focuses on the prison-industrial complex and how companies exploit and profit from marginalized communities in incarceration. From an abolitionist perspective, he hopes his research contributes to future policy when it comes to how we can end the prison-industrial complex, mass incarceration, and foster restorative community justice programs.

**Carolina Kent** is a graduate of San Francisco State University with a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in Prison Reentry Studies. Inspired by the lived experience of an individual she met through **SFSU’s Project Rebound**, her research investigates the systemic intersection of mental health and the carceral state, specifically within the Los Angeles County jail system. Through her work, she seeks to bridge the gap between criminal justice and public health to ensure individuals in crisis receive care rather than confinement.

**Danielle Key** is an undergraduate student at John Jay College, majoring in sociology and criminology with minors in community justice and psychology. Her research examines how oppressive social structures and institutions harm Black womxn. Her work is grounded in Black feminist thought, critical

criminology, abolition feminism, critical sociology, the Black radical tradition, and many more theoretical frameworks. Through her scholarship, she seeks to challenge dominant narratives and center marginalized voices. After completing her undergraduate studies, Danielle plans to pursue a PhD in Sociology and continue her research in Black feminist abolition.

**Ramon Leclerc** is a 4th year minor majoring in Sociology and native New Yorker. Ramon has a passion for social justice and equality for all. Ramon's piece is an interview conducted with Ramon by a peer exploring Ramon's experience in the foster care system through a sociology lens. Ramon hopes to destigmatize people who experience the foster care system with his piece. Ramon hopes to continue his education after earning his bachelor's by earning a master's degree in Public Policy. Ramon will continue to fight for social justice for all.

**Vi Lee** (they/them) was born and raised on unceded Wampanoag land (Boston, MA) and currently lives in Yelamu (San Francisco). They are a student at San Francisco State University, working toward Bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Asian American Studies. Vi is of mixed Chinese and Italian Sicilian ancestry and holds their ancestors central with all the work that they do, understanding their family's migratory history as it relates to settler colonialism of Turtle Island and Western imperialism at large. They began organizing in high school around Ethnic Studies principles and the inclusion of Asian American histories within school curriculum as it relates to resisting the model minority myth. They continued organizing at SFSU with the Student Union, working on resisting the budget and class cuts as well as the university's OpenAI contract, and former financial investments in weapon manufacturing companies. Vi could not be where they are without the support and guidance of others, especially faculty in the Race and Resistance Studies Department at SFSU, namely Dr. Leora Kava and Gopal Dayaneni, as well as Teresa Pratt, James Martel, Dr. Albert de la Tierra, and many more.

**Kim Lonzo** is a recent B.A. graduate of the City University of New York's (CUNY) Graduate Center Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies program, a recipient of the prestigious CUNY Graduate Center's Thomas W. Smith Fellowship, and a returning author to the ARCJS. With access to hundreds of courses from within the CUNY system, Kim chose John Jay College of Criminal Justice to craft his degree program which draws from three disciplines: dispute resolution, sociology and psychology. He believes that effective advocacy for others requires an understanding of how we see ourselves, how we think others see us and how we communicate our wants and needs to each other. At John Jay College, Kim distinguished himself as the lead mentor with the ACE-My Brother's Keeper Connect Summer Program, an Obama Foundation initiative. This student success program aims to support men of color as they navigate the challenges of entering college. There, he spearheaded an innovative

training for fourteen mentors using restorative justice practices and group facilitation skills. Kim's specialized programming supported over 140 mentees' academic, emotional, and career development as well as established a connection that will greatly improve their chances of college completion. A veteran of the United States Air Force, Kim has proudly served as a member of the John Jay Student Council, volunteered as a Court Navigator with the New York State Court's Access to Justice Program, and is a certified Divorce Mediator. Kim will bring his skills and knowledge to law school in the Fall of 2026. He wants to work in public interest law where he will focus on underserved communities as a legal advocate and researcher.

**Nat Marberry** is an undergraduate scholar at San Francisco State University. Nat is double majoring in Criminal Justice Studies and Psychology.

**Ariana Martinez** is a first-generation college student who is set to graduate from San Francisco State University in Spring 2026. She is pursuing a degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Early Childhood Development. Although these fields may seem distinct, her academic and professional interests intersect through a shared commitment to advocating for youth involved in or at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. Throughout her undergraduate experience, Ariana has engaged in community outreach by visiting local schools to educate young people about the law and their rights, reinforcing her dedication to prevention and empowerment. Her research, titled "Examining the Long-Term Effects of California's Inmate Fire Camp Program: Recidivism, Employment, and Rehabilitation Results," was inspired by news coverage and social media depicting incarcerated firefighters on the front lines of wildfires. This coverage sparked her interest in a more critical examination of the program. Ariana's work analyzes how systemic barriers, particularly the lack of recognized certifications and employment pathways, limit successful reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals, despite their essential contributions. While the program may reduce short-term recidivism, her research highlights that long-term outcomes are undermined by structural inequalities that restrict employment opportunities. As a result, Ariana advocates for policy reforms that include fair wages, accessible certification pathways, and stronger reentry support systems to ensure that individuals who risk their lives in wildfire suppression have equitable opportunities upon release.

**Ashley Márquez** is an undergraduate student majoring in Law & Society at the John Jay College campus. Proud of her Salvadoran heritage, her writing often focuses on matters affecting the Latino community. The writing within "Faith As Empire" comes from her experience with religion, community, politics, and identity all tangled into one complex issue. Despite writing being more of a pastime for her, Marquez takes pride in this first published piece and has hopes

that it resonates with those who share similar experiences within today's confusing, and often contradictory, world.

**Shania McCombs** is an International Criminal Justice major with a minor in Human Rights. Photography has always been a friend of hers; at her middle school's club fair, the table displaying different cameras and lenses piqued her interest. When she picked up a camera, it was heavy but warm. She shares, "As I looked through the viewfinder the room around me, which previously seemed so colorless, had become saturated. Although the lens could barely fit in my hands, I held onto it for dear life, for I didn't want the liveliness of the very scene to dissipate. At that moment, my narrative crafted behind the lens had started. From protests and museums to the kitchen of my house, I had documented not only my life but the experiences of complete strangers. I captured many emotions that were shown in different forms: laughter at sweet sixteens, the chants that fill the streets filled with grief and liberation, and the silence of exhibits showcasing the strokes of an individual fully engulfed in their craft. I have taken steps to highlight movements that shatter societal norms and to enhance the beauty of communities that shaped the scene that had made me pick up the camera in the first place. In this journal, I'm sharing this vision with you."

**Anna Morin** is a Forensic Psychology BA/MA student with a minor in Creative Writing at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Originally from the woods of Maine, Morin now resides in New York City with her three cats. She is interested in how popular media influences perceptions of the criminal justice system and justice impacted individuals, as well as finding ways to help reduce recidivism in the correctional system. This is Morin's first publication, and she hopes to have many more as she pursues a career in research and academia.

**Neftaly Paredes:** Neftaly Paredes was born and raised in San Francisco in a Spanish speaking household, and is a first-generation college graduate along with her older brother. She grew up with both her parents, who came to the U.S from Mexico during the 90s. She and her brother were raised in the southeast side of the city. Despite its reputation, her community is multi-cultural, hardworking, and beautiful. Growing up, she and her family would see inequity and face discrimination due to their background as Latinos. With the support she received from her family, teachers, and community, she decided to pursue higher education and become the first person in her family to get a double major.

**Kayleen Rivera** is a Manhattan-born Puerto Rican writer and psychology student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Whose work explores identity, culture, and social inequality. Raised in public housing, she writes about growing up in the projects while navigating code-switching, the perceptions vs. reality of NYCHA, and community dynamics. Her lived experiences shape her academic interests in understanding trauma, systemic inequality, and misinformation about

public housing. She blends personal narrative with research to highlight overlooked voices and challenge assumptions about marginalized communities. Through her work, she aims to bridge lived experience with psychological research and advocate for more inclusive, accessible support systems.

**Margo Salomons** is an Afro-Puerto Rican woman and a graduating Forensic Psychology student with a Health and Wellness Minor. Their work in this journal is a manifesto titled *Violence Against the Global Majority: Intersectional Perspectives*, is a description of the struggles that marginalized communities in the US face, and the benefit of using black feminist ideology to expand the way that we think about them.