



Greenlining Summer Associates Class of 2017 Biographies



Alexa Diaz, Environmental Equity

Alexa Diaz was born and raised in Riverside, California. She graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara in June 2015, and received a B.A. in Environmental Studies. While at UC Santa Barbara, Alexa studied abroad in Rhotia, Tanzania and Lund, Sweden to gain a global perspective in environmental sustainability. After graduating, she served as an AmeriCorps member at Forth in Portland, Oregon where she helped develop and implement an electric vehicle car share in an underserved community. This experience sparked her passion for transportation equity and she hopes to advocate for disadvantaged communities to have access to emerging transportation technologies. Alexa is currently pursuing her Master of Public Policy with a concentration in transportation policy at Oregon State University. In her free time, she enjoys staying active, cooking, listening to music, and spending time with friends.



Alonso Santos-Gonzalez, Energy Equity

Alonso Santos-Gonzalez was born and raised in Fresno, California. Alonso graduated from University of California, Berkeley with a Bachelor of Science in Conservation and Resource Studies, with an emphasis on Water Resource Management. Alonso understands environmental issues and how they interact with race, class and politics and he recognizes the growing need for experts to create comprehensive solutions. Alonso aspires to return to the Central Valley to help solve scientific and political water issues that negatively impact his home community. This has influenced Alonso's drive to study and work on environmental and equity issues, especially in terms of water justice in the Central Valley. Alonso's passion in life is music and he is an active member of UC Berkeley's mariachi group: Mariachi Luz de Oro, where he plays guitar, guitarrón, and sings. He hopes to learn to play new musical instruments and develop his performing skills. Alonso also enjoys playing soccer and spending time with his immediate and extended family.



Angel Lara, Health Equity

Angel Lara is a first-generation, Mexican-American, queer-identified men's health advocate from Bakersfield, California. He recently graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a B.A. in Public Health and was awarded the Gates Millennium Scholarship and the United Health Foundation Scholarship. Additionally, Angel is a proud alum of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. He has worked alongside the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at U.C. Berkeley, has interned at Kaiser Permanente, and most recently was the Congressional Health Intern for the U.S. Senator for California, Senator Dianne Feinstein. Angel spent a year studying Global Health at the University of Copenhagen in Copenhagen, Denmark where he learned about racial inequities in European countries. A son of working class immigrants, Angel and his family lacked access to healthcare insurance which has directly rooted his interest in preventative medicine. Angel plans to work in the healthcare field prior to starting graduate school to receive an M.B.A./M.P.H. He hopes to give a voice to gay Latinos in the Central Valley of California and to make sure that their mental and sexual health needs are met. In his spare time, Angel enjoys binge watching Youtube videos and visiting museums with his four younger brothers.



Curran Cross, Diversity & Inclusion

Curran Cross was born and raised in the Detroit metropolitan area. Homeschooled from second to twelfth grade, Curran attended the University of Notre Dame and majored in History and Francophone Studies. Working within the Caribbean Student Association, the Fellowship of the College of Arts and Letters, and his residence hall council, Curran sought to engage his fellow students in constructive, cross-cultural dialogue. His research projects in France, centered on racial identity among mixed-race individuals in the Franco-Caribbean, and informed his later push for multiculturalism and the international realization of post-colonial narratives. In his current work, Curran teaches full-time and tutors part-time in the south and west sides of Chicago where his curriculum emphasizes social-emotional learning and restorative justice. Curran enjoys learning foreign languages. Curran is fluent in French, and currently finishing learning Spanish and Portuguese. Next he hopes to learn Russian and Arabic. He eventually hopes to leverage his loves of policy and foreign languages into a career with the United Nations or on Capitol Hill.



Jorge Rodriguez, Economic Equity

Jorge Rodriguez was born and raised in Berkeley, California and graduated from the University of California, Riverside with a degree in Public Policy. His passion for public service and desire to create social change has solidified his commitment to pursue a career in local government as an aspiring city administrator. Jorge has worked with and for marginalized communities in the Bay Area through interning with city and regional governments in California. Prior to The Greenlining Institute, Jorge was part of the Coro Fellowship and has direct experience in understanding how policy can generate tangible results at the local level. He plans to pursue an M.P.A./J.D. in the near future and hopes to return to his community to design and implement policies that address the social, economic, and political inequalities that can create social change. Jorge enjoys mentoring youth from low-income minority communities and inspiring them to create a better future for their families in hopes that they return as leaders to address barriers that prevent socio-economic progress in their communities.



Luciano Zuniga, Health Equity

Luciano Zuniga was born and raised in South Sacramento, California and is a recent graduate from the University of California, Berkeley. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Public Health with a minor in Public Policy. Luciano's passion for health equity stems from a childhood of growing up in a low-income and ethnically diverse community where socioeconomic status impacts life expectancy. His experiences volunteering for the Health Advocates of Alameda Health System in East Oakland, where he provided social service support for medically underserved populations, allowed him to understand the barriers that exist within healthcare. Last summer, he completed an internship with Kaiser Permanente's KP Launch program, working with their Care Management Institute where he worked on an opportunity assessment impacting clinical services for Medicare patients. He aims to work in healthcare for a few years before receiving a master's in Health Policy and Management in order to help change the way hospitals operate and support communities of color. As a proponent of health and wellness, Luciano enjoys cooking, yoga, running, playing volleyball, and blogging.



Natalie Hernandez, Economic Equity

Natalie is a first generation Guatemalan-American student from Burbank, California. She recently graduated from the University of San Diego, where she studied Political Science and Spanish. Natalie loves to travel and learn about different political systems. She has participated in short-term study abroad programs in Morocco, Guatemala, Spain, and Austria. She recently came back from a semester abroad in Cuba where she attained a wide understanding on U.S.-Cuba relations.

Natalie is interested in learning how to economically empower low to moderate income communities. Having moved around often while growing up in Los Angeles, Natalie understands the importance of a home in creating economic stability. Last summer she interned at Genesis, a nonprofit that works to provide a platform to leaders so that they can have a vehicle to affect public policy to address issues of racial and economic equity. In the year prior, she was selected as a research fellow for the New Americans Museum where she interviewed Syrian refugees and tracked their transition to the United States. Natalie hopes to work in the field of public policy and community organization. In her spare time, Natalie loves to watch sunsets, catch up on #CentralAmericanTwitter, and expand her knowledge of issues happening on the U.S.-Mexico border.



Nkechi Okwu-Lawrence, Diversity & Inclusion

Nkechi Okwu-Lawrence was born and raised in Wilmington, Delaware to immigrant Nigerian parents. She recently graduated with her bachelor's degree from the University of Delaware, majoring in Biology and minoring in Human Development and Family Studies. After the Summer Associate Program, she plans to move back to Delaware and work for a year before going to graduate school in the Fall of 2019 to obtain a dual degree in Public Health and Business Administration. During the summer of 2017, Nkechi interned with the Office of Health Equity and Inclusion at A.I. Dupont Hospital, which exposed her to racial health disparities and inequities in the United States. After learning about these disparities, she became passionate about social and racial disparities and decided to go into healthcare administration—keeping communities of color that do not have quality healthcare or healthcare at all at the forefront of her

career. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends and family and watching shows on Netflix.



Paloma Hernandez, Environmental Equity

Paloma Hernandez is from the small city of Maywood, CA located in southeast Los Angeles. She earned her B.S. in Earth Systems from Stanford University and is currently pursuing her master's in the same program. The focus of her master's is environmental justice, or the intersection of race, poverty, and the environment. She became passionate about environmental justice when she studied in Hawai'i and built connections with native groups fighting to reclaim their land, their history, and the Hawaiian kingdom. The human and natural connections she created on the Big Island and Kauai contrasted sharply with the desolation, both of nature and community, that she felt growing up in Southeast LA. This sparked a yearning for reconnection with her hometown and her Latinx identity, which is a journey she is very grateful to be on. In the future, Paloma hopes to build community, purge environmental harms, and bring wealth to poor and brown communities like the one she grew up in. In her free time, Paloma loves to scour Yelp for cheap, authentic eats. Celebrating the intersection of food and culture is how she finds connection with diverse communities all over the world.