

IJCJF Scholarship Award Recipients

1ST PLACE WINNER- OLATOMIDE OWOLABI



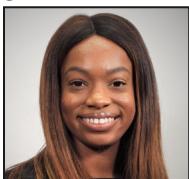
OLATOMIDE OWOLABI, a second year law student at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law and 2018 graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, recalls an incident from first grade in which he was ridiculed because of his name. He was bullied throughout elementary school and as one of only a few Black students at his school, he experienced “otherness” at an early age- he was Black first, and a person second. But it is precisely these experiences that shaped him into the strong person that he is today – a welcoming and inclusive person to people of all different backgrounds who is eager to advocate for those who do not have a voice to speak out against injustice. Mr. Owolabi, who also has a Master’s in Public Health, learned firsthand that health disparities are closely tied to minorities with a low socioeconomic strata or that reside in low income communities. Throughout his various internships, community service work and student organizational work such as with BLSA, Mr. Owolabi has consistently advocated for underserved communities. He is the vice-president of his BLSA Chapter, and has sought sponsorship for BLSA’s activities. He also serves as a mentor to incoming students, as well as with community-based organizations called Street Law in Chicago and Just the Beginning- A Pipeline Organization.

2ND PLACE WINNER- CHAUNTAY PARRISH



CHAUNTAY PARRISH, a third year law student at Northern Illinois University College of Law, is a graduate of Illinois State University with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Sciences. Growing up, Ms. Parrish observed family members being taken away by the system and constantly cycling in and out of jail. While her family members were involved in illegal activities, Ms. Parrish was deeply affected by seeing them in court, without the best representation, seeing their voices suppressed and their concerns unheard. Those events motivated her decision to become a public defender, so she can zealously advocate for her clients and also to form a community center where the public can have legal questions answered and receive legal advice. As the only member of her immediate family to attend college and law school, Ms. Parrish has struggled to find motivation and support. However, Ms. Parrish has successfully made the Dean’s List several times, studied abroad and served in student organizations such as BLSA and the Student Bar Association, as well as working as a graduate assistant in the University Writing Center, an intern with the Cabrini Green Legal Aid, and as a judicial extern to Judge Bonita Coleman at Markham Courthouse.

3RD PLACE WINNER- CHYNNIQUE ROSS



CHYNNIQUE ROSS, a third year law student at UIC John Marshall Law School, is a 2017 graduate of Murray State University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science. A Spring 2020 Dean’s List student, Ms. Ross also served as Advocate General of the Black Law Students Association (BLSA) and was a semifinalist in the Constance Baker Motley Mock Trial Competition. While attending law school full-time, Ms. Ross has worked as a student attorney in the UIC John Marshall Trademark Clinic, a legal intern at Eccleston Law, and as a judicial extern to Judge Raul Vega in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Domestic Relations Division. A lifelong Chicago resident, Ms. Ross has been very active with BLSA and has organized community service events on the south side for BLSA students to give back.

4TH PLACE WINNER- MARKUS BROOKS



MARKUS BROOKS, a 2020 Summa Cum Laude graduate of Jackson State University with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and Correctional Services, and member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., describes himself as always having a passion for the law and public service. After losing several friends to gun violence and negligence, he asked himself “What can I do to help?” His answer- to dedicate his life to public service, beginning with attending law school and meeting his future goals of becoming a State’s Attorney, Congressman and U.S. Presidential Candidate in 2036! Mr. Brooks has been heavily involved in serving the community, having served abroad in distributing medical supplies, as well as locally in such endeavors as spearheading voter registration drives. Mr. Brooks is a first year law student at Northern Illinois University College of Law.