

## **Karen Gale Mardenborough**

B.A. Urban Studies, *magna cum laude*  
Salutatorian, Class of 2020

Karen hails from the beautiful twin island Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis. Karen excelled in her education and after graduating from high school, became an untrained elementary school teacher. She spent just over one and a half years on the job before migrating to America, moving to New York City in December 1999.

While raising her two children, she worked part-time and decided it was time to go back to school. In 2005, Karen enrolled at Cypress Community College in California.

However, after only two years, she and her children returned to New York. There, Karen was able to get a part-time position as a College Assistant at Hostos Community College, and later took and passed the CUNY Office Assistant exam. This provided her with a secure, permanent, and full-time position working for the Human Resources Department at Hostos.

Karen took advantage of CUNY's tuition waiver benefit to pursue her higher education, earning an Associate's degree in Criminal Justice from Hostos in June 2017. Her education at Hostos made Karen realize that it is not only the justice system that is broken, but there are so many disparities within her own community that need to be mended. She subsequently enrolled at CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies, and has now earned a bachelor's degree in Urban Studies, *summa cum laude*. She will enter SLU's master's program in Fall 2020.

Combining her work ethic with her education has given Karen a broader perspective on the life challenges faced by people everywhere. Karen's relentless conviction that all people should be treated equally has deeply shaped her world view. She is passionate about finding a solution to the housing crisis in New York City, and aspires to be a changemaker in her community and beyond.

Karen says there is a mantra that she lives by, "If we want to see change, we must become that change we seek."

