

Marshall-Motley Scholars Program

FULL TRANSCRIPT

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Marshall-Motley Scholars Program, recorded November 9, 2023.

[Marshall-Motley Scholars Program video]

Narrator: [gentle piano music] In the Civil Rights Movement's earliest days, Thurgood Marshall formed the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. For over 80 years in courtrooms across the country, our attorneys have relentlessly fought for the rights we have today. Having those rights, keeping those rights, that belong to every American takes work. Commitment. It is indeed a calling. At a time when those rights are more threatened than ever, our work matters more than ever. That's why today, we are honored to introduce the very first Marshall-Motley Scholars named for our founder, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and the iconic litigator Judge Constance Baker Motley. Scholars are from different backgrounds, yet share the same commitment to uphold, maintain, and protect our civil rights, to answer the call, and bring an end to racial injustice.

Shandrea Sellers: Racial justice and choice-filled lives are not mutually exclusive.

Briana Hayes: As long as I live, I live to fight for freedom.

Markus Reneau: Racial justice in education is when Black students are provided with equitable access to quality public education.

Ashley Fox: In every space, my mission is also to connect with people in ways that ultimately create more just and inclusive communities.

Traelon Rodgers: Since the age of 11, I have been committed to fighting for equality and justice in the South.

Victor Olofin: In this society, poverty should not be criminalized.

Dominique Erney: I am in the fight for racial justice on behalf of Black people.

Kendell Long: I want to be a leader that is a connector between coalitions and builds efficacy in communities by using the law to field material change that is larger than me or what any one individual can do.

Princess Jefferson: I intend to offer my voice, visibility, and assure the experiences of my community.

Maydrian Strozier-Lowe: It's about changing the narrative and the dynamic and the systemic outlook for African Americans.

Webinar host: Good evening. How are you, Ashley?

Ashley: Hi. Doing well. How are you all?

Hosts: Doing Wonderful. Doing wonderful.

Well, good to see you.

We really recognize how rigorous this process was and it's one of the reasons why we wanted to just be able to talk to finalists personally. But I also wanted to reach out because I wanted to congratulate you on having been selected as a Marshall-Motley Scholar.

Ashley: I'm not crying. [all laughing]

Host: We're not crying. You're crying.

Webinar conversation: For having been selected as a Marshall-Motley Scholar. Wait. Wait, wait. Wait, I —

I was sitting here. I was like, she's going to tell me I didn't get it, the way she was going to — [all laughing]

Sherrilyn Iffil: Oh, hey there.

Hi, how you doing?

Hi, how are you?

How are you?

You can unmute.

Unmute yourself.

You can unmute yourself now. [all laughing]

Thank you. That's really awesome news, especially two days before my graduation ceremony.

Yes, I would think. I would think.

Victor: I can't wait to get to work for the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program. And it's just an honor to be a part of the inaugural cohort.

Host: Congratulations, Marshall-Motley Scholars. Now, let's get to work.

[music swells and video ends]

Angela Winfield: Welcome, everybody. It's wonderful to have you here today for this presentation highlighting the NAACP LDF's Marshall-Motley Scholars Program. My name is Angela Winfield and I am vice president and chief diversity officer here at LSAC. And at LSAC, we strive for access, equity, and fairness in law school admissions. And we are here to support talented individuals like yourself on their prelaw to practice journeys. But today is not about me and it's not about LSAC. It's about this wonderful program that you just learned a little bit more about. I am delighted to be joined by Adria Kimbrough, who is the student recruitment coordinator for the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program. And she was also the prelaw advisor at the illustrious Dillard University. I'm also joined by two Marshall-Motley Scholars, Miss Ashley Conyers and Mr. Victor Olofin. And they're going to be joining us a little bit later. But right now, I want to invite Adria Kimbrough to join me. And I've got a few questions for you. But actually before I get to that, I've actually got a little bit more information that I should share about the logistics of this. We will be taking Q & A at the end of this webinar. You should know

that you can feel free at any time during the program to go ahead and submit those questions using the Q & A feature. However, because we have so many people on the webinar, we will not be able to get to everyone's questions. We do have some staff from the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program and LDF as well as folks from LSAC that are going to be trying to get to your questions and answer them as they can as we go along. But we will be taking time and reserving time at the end to get to as many questions as we can. But feel free to go ahead and submit those as we go along. And then of course, thank you all for joining us for this program. And now, with that, I will turn to you, Adria, and get this conversation started. How are you doing today, Adria?

Adria Kimbrough: I'm great, Angela. How are you?

Angela: Wonderful. Wonderful. It's a pleasure to have you and to be talking about this program. My first question for you, in the video, they mentioned a little bit about the NAACP and the Legal Defense Fund, but would you give us a little bit more background and history about what this organization is and does?

Adria: Yes, so first, again, thank you for having me again this year. It's always a treat to be here and to be with prospective applicants. It is a privilege to work for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, commonly known as LDF, which is our country's first and foremost civil rights law firm. And we were founded in 1940 by Thurgood Marshall, which hopefully is a name that is familiar to some of the attendees today. Thurgood Marshall was the first African American on the US Supreme Court and was the founder of our organization back in- Are you able to hear and see?

Angela: Yes, yes.

Adria: Okay.

Angela: We've got you back.

Adria: Okay, excellent. But again, LDF is the country's first and foremost civil rights law firm, founded in 1940 by Thurgood Marshall, the first African American US Supreme Court Justice. And our mission is very simple. It is to achieve racial justice, equality, and an inclusive society. The Brown v. Board of Education case is one that people often are familiar with that is a part of our legacy. But we are very much engaged in the pursuit of racial justice today. Though the civil rights movement may seem very much a Black and white long gone experience, it is very much in living color. And we have a team of lawyers who are actively working on these cases all over the country and in large part in the South.

Angela: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that. And many of us may have heard at least a little something about the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program or we wouldn't be here on this webinar, but I'd love for you to share a little bit more about just how special this program is and what it does. Adria: Sure. Indeed. The program is special and it's one for those who are participants really transformative. So the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program is named in honor of our legendary founder, Thurgood Marshall and Constance Baker Motley, who is an iconic litigator who really doesn't get enough recognition but was the first African American woman to be on the federal court. And we honor them with this program that is designed to help support the next generation of civil rights attorneys. This program is still relatively new, founded in 2021. So the video that the attendees saw just a moment ago was our very first cohort of scholars who are now in their third year of law school. But again, our commitment and groundbreaking commitment at that is to endow the South with the next generation of civil rights attorneys. We do that through providing professional development support. But I think the thing that most people think about when they think about our program is the financial support that scholars receive, specifically full tuition for law school as well as support for the cost of attendance, the overall cost of attendance, which includes living expenses, in addition to that, paid internships, as well as a fellowship opportunity when they graduate. So it really, we try to think about it comprehensively. So it's the financial support, but many other things that scholars will need as they continue on the pipeline toward becoming civil rights attorneys who will work alongside Black communities in the South.

Angela: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that because it is an incredibly beneficial program to society, to law, but also to the wonderful scholars who get to participate in this program. We all know bills and finances are real, and programs like Marshall-Motley certainly help to support folks along their pathway and along their journey to becoming civil rights attorneys and activists. Wonderful. Thank you so much. That's a great background. I'm actually going to move to the scholars themselves for a little bit. And don't worry. Don't worry, participants. We will get to the logistics and the nitty gritty, but I want to learn more about what it actually means to be a Marshall-Motley Scholar. So Ashley, Victor, welcome. I would love for each of you to just give us a little intro and background on yourselves. Where's your hometown? What undergraduate institution did you go to? And where are you on your law school journey? What year are you? And where are you attending law school? Ashley, let's start with you.

Ashley Conyers: Yeah. Hi, everyone. My name is Ashley Conyers. I am originally from Tallahassee, Florida, born and raised. And I went to the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida for both my bachelor's and my master's. And I'm currently a 1L at the

illustrious North Carolina Central University School of Law here in Durham, North Carolina.

Angela: Wonderful. Thank you so much. And Victor, how about you?

Victor: Sure. So hi, everyone. My name is Victor Olofin. I am from Loxahatchee, Florida, which is in South Florida. Small town west of West Palm Beach. And I am a 3L at Harvard Law School. And I went to the Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida.

Angela: Incredible. Thank you so much for taking the time to be with us and to talk to these potential scholars. Right now is an incredibly busy time in law school. We know we're getting ready for finals. So we appreciate you really carving out and showing your commitment to this program and sharing a bit about your experiences. And to the participants, don't feel left out. This is not just a Florida thing. We got some Florida representation here, but it's open to more than that. So let's dive right in here. Now, we know this is a civil rights attorney program and helping building and supporting that. I want to start with you, Victor. What got you interested? And why did you apply to this program?

Victor: Sure. So, it's a simple story really. I knew I wanted to go to law school and I knew I wanted to practice civil rights law. I just didn't know how I was going to pay for it, right? So I'm working at the Orleans Public Defenders at the time. I'm doing reentry work. And I get a text message from my brother saying, you know, "Hey, have you seen this program? This would be perfect for you, right?" And so I really have to give a lot of credit to my brother because he sort of put me on so to speak. And so I'm looking at the link that he sent me and it's like this first announcement of the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program. And this is a volatile period, right? And so, you know, COVID is running rampant through communities and particularly the Black community. And you know, we had the murder, the tragic murder of George Floyd of course. And so this program was sort of like a beacon of hope for me in reading through it. And so I'm looking through the program and I'm sort of mind blown. Because I'm seeing, like, okay, I could possibly go to law school debt-free, right? I can do the work that I want to and I can do it particularly in the South where I'm from and where the need is. And so yeah, it was like of course I'm going to apply. It was sort of like, this is amazing program. I would love to be a part of this. And I had been doing the work for years in New Orleans, in Atlanta as an undergraduate at Florida State. And so I was just really excited for the opportunity. So yeah, it was a simple story for me.

Angela: Yeah. Great one. I love that imagery of the beacon of hope because I think it is for so many, you know, actually going through the process but also for all of us who will benefit from having you all in the profession. Ashley, what about you? What was your origin story for finding this program and wanting to apply?

Ashley: Yeah, so I have the term of non-traditional student. So I did my undergrad at University of South Florida, moved to Miami and actually started a career in retail management. And I did that for the last eight years. Different brands, worked as a brand manager, store director, general manager down in South Florida. And always had this want to be an attorney but had a lot of, like, fear and insecurity about just going to law school in the process of the application. And so, I eventually kind of gathered myself and just stepped out on faith and went ahead and quit my career and started a role in the AmeriCorps through the NLADA, National Legal Aid and Defenders Association with the public defender's office in Augusta, Georgia. And I worked as a data analyst and a community partners volunteer. And working with public defenders and seeing public interests law up close and personal and getting to work with clients specifically, I got to work with clients that had been charged with felonies at the pretrial level in the local jail. And seeing Black men in chains, seeing children, Black children in chains, working with our juvenile clients, it just really awakened this fire in me. So I knew I wanted to help people early on as far as what my law career would be, but I knew that that was going to be something as far as the human issue within criminal justice reform that I wanted to do. And so, honestly it was an email from LSAC last year that I saw Marshall-Motley and I got to see just some Q & As before and the inaugural video that we just watched at the beginning of this. And it just, it felt like this could be for me. And so I went ahead and sat on the webinar just like this last year and did the application process. And it's been just a whirlwind, but a very surreal and a real blessing in my life.

Angela: Incredible. I'm going to stay with you, Ashley. Because what I want to do is I kind of want to walk through this experience from, you know, being a 1L and just getting into the program to Victor where you are now, where you're preparing to graduate and go out and start practicing. So Ashley, let's just stay with you. What is it like you're, you know, not quite through your first semester at law school? What has it meant to be a part of this program in your 1L year?

Ashley: For me, I think the biggest aspect that has really been impactful for me has been the financial aspect. So going to law school, I very much thought about the debt, but I knew that to be an attorney, to go to law school, that's something that is innate. And so I thought about didn't have a home so I'm going to have this mortgage size loan and that's okay. And so I have been able with this program to really kind of release

myself of that weight of the debt burden that is law school and really be a student. And that has never been my journey as far as being a student. I've always have have worked part-time or full-time throughout my undergraduate career and my master's to facilitate life. And so I now can, I have the ability to concentrate and really just take in everything that is a 1L, especially your 1L semester. It's so new just to find the balance between life as a law student and the balance of now, you know, what does your extracurriculars look like? There's so many options. And so I think that financial piece, not being something that weighs on me allows me to really move forward. And the program offers a bit of clarity, a lot of clarity as far as public interest work. And so I have very much my internships planned out, my fellowship, and what my career will look like. And I think that is something that is just, it helps me be able to, again, concentrate and just stay on course.

Angela: Yeah, you've raised some really, really good points about this program through your experience with it. It's like the investment in you allows you to invest in the work, right? And building up your skills and focus and that concentration that so many students struggle with because they do have other commitments and priorities and things that they're balancing in their lives. So I think it's just a beautiful thing. And I just want to underline how that program allows you to focus. The investment pays forward. And you're obviously investing it by using your time to learn and grow in law school. Victor, you are in your 3L year. You're getting ready to graduate. I'm going to give you an early congratulations because there's no doubt in my mind that you are continuing going. What has that journey been like, being a part of a cohort going through all three of your years at Harvard Law School? What has that meant to you? And what kind of experiences have you had as part of the cohort?

Victor: Sure. So, I think that, you know, having that built-in support system with Marshall-Motley has been so impactful for my professional and my academic careers. You know, I sort of put the support from Marshall-Motley in sort of three buckets, right? I think it's a professional relief and Ashley talked a lot about this. It's professional relief. It's professional clout, which is important, right? With networking and connecting and building relationships. And it's financial relief, right? And so I say professional relief in the way that while other students are sort of trying to figure out, especially during 1L year, what job they might get or when they're going through EIP or a summer job matching process. You don't have to think about that, right? You can focus on school. You can focus on, you know, getting in community organizations or engaging in student practice organizations. It frees up a lot of mental space for you to engage in the sort of things that you want to engage in without that added stress, right? And, you know, some organizations and firms won't even take 1Ls as employees. And so you know that you're

going to have a guaranteed job your 1L year, your 1L summer. And so it takes a lot of that stress off. And then I say professional clout because it's like, listen, I leverage the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program in almost every interaction I have with professors, with academics because the program is interesting. And people want to help. People want to support you. People want to get to know you. Professors do. Professors want to get you in touch with people who can help you in this mission of going back to the South and fighting for racial justice.

And so, you know, just leveraging that, speaking to judges, speaking to legal practitioners, you know, engaging in research with these people, and being able to grow with your colleagues and your cohort members in this form or fashion has been amazing. And so there's a lot of networking and connections and relationship building that comes off of being a Marshall-Motley Scholar that I've been able to take advantage of over these last three years. And lastly, financial relief. As Ashley touched on a lot with the growing, you know, I don't have to talk about the growing cost of law school. For many of us Black and Brown folks, a career in civil rights law is prohibitively expensive, especially with how expensive law school is. Really law schools is becoming prohibitively expensive for many. And so not having that debt burden has been simply amazing. Not having the stress, like Ashley, I worked all the way through undergrad. I worked part-time. I worked 25 hours a week in restaurants just to pay the bills. And not having to do that now has been amazing. And having paid internships, knowing where my fellowship is coming from, you know. It really frees up so much mental space, those three things, not having, or having that professional relief, having that financial relief, and being able to relationship build based on being a Marshall-Motley Scholar has been tremendously impactful these last three years. And so yeah, it's just been a pleasure.

Angela: Great. Great. I just want to highlight a couple of things that you've said. And one of them is the relationship building and how important that has been to you. And it's not just the relationships that you're building within the cohort of other scholars. I also noticed that there's some cross cohort collaboration and relationship building. You know, when we were prepping for this webinar, you know, you and Ashley were familiar with one another. But even beyond that, it's helping you to build and strengthen your network amongst attorneys, professors. And that is really, really gratifying to hear. I'm going to stay with you because you mentioned something during your last response and I want to make sure everyone knows what it means. So you mentioned an acronym, EIP. Can you first tell us what is that? What is EIP?

Victor: EIP is like the job search process at Harvard Law School in particular. It might be at all law schools. I don't know if the acronym is the same. But basically, it's just a

summer job matching process where you interview with a bunch of firms. There is also a public interest system at HLS that does a similar thing, but you basically interview with a lot of the firms. They come out to the law school. And it's just a matching process and you go through, you know, three, four, five, six interviews with different firms, different organizations. And they try to find a good fit. And you know, a lot of students fear, striking out fear maybe not having the grades for a firm to recognize them or give them an offer. A lot of folks fear, like, not presenting well in the interviews. But with Marshall-Motley Scholars Program, you know that you have a job. You know that, you know, you're guaranteed a position somewhere. You know that you'll have that sort of professional development at the end of your 1L year. And so it just takes so, like, immense stress off the table and allows you to just really engage in the sort of academic experience that you want to during that time.

Angela: And can you tell us about your 1L summer, what you did for your internship as part of this and even, you know, beyond that? Because you're getting through the program. So what have your internships been like?

Victor: Sure. So I did my 1L summer at LDF in DC, right? And wow, the breadth of civil rights training I received at LDF was nothing short of amazing. I got training on capital punishment issues. I got training on desegregation matters. Redistricting was a very active docket. But even apart from professional development, my colleagues, the attorneys, the caliber of excellence that I was around was simply amazing. And so, like, for example, I would just be upstairs, like, casually having pizza with Deuel Ross, and then you know, the next year you see that he's arguing *Merrill v. Milligan*, which is a huge Section 2 Voting Rights Act case. That was before the Supreme Court last term. He argued that case, right? Or you know, I did a writing project, an extensive writing project last semester on a very niche legal issue. And the foremost legal scholar on that particular issue was somebody I had worked with at LDF. And so it's amazing. Or Leah Aden who just argued before the Supreme Court in this term. All of these people I've engaged with, I've met, I've talked with. And so it was just amazing being at LDF. And you know, they have a very prolific office. You go in there and you feel like you're in a time capsule because Thurgood Marshall and his records and his desk. And Constance Baker Motley is on the walls and you just feel like you're a part of something bigger than yourself. So that was amazing. And then my second summer, I worked at a small community organizing firm in Miami called Community Justice Project. It was a five-attorney shop. And we really were in touch with the community. We went to rallies. We went to protests a lot. And we really got to work. So I remember we were able to argue at the Fort Lauderdale Sheriff's Department against their use of a surveillance technology in primarily low income Black and Brown communities. And so getting to

pick fights with them was fun. And then I was also got to argue before the Broward County Commission on TV. So I got to, you know, send the link to my family. So that was cool. And I was arguing for a heat standard for outdoor workers, getting them access to rent shade and recovery periods. And so I had extremely substantive experiences both summers and, you know, the MMSP administration was just, you know, extremely helpful in facilitating those internships. And it really made my experience what it was, so.

Angela: Awesome. Awesome.

Victor: Yeah, great.

Angela: It's wonderful that you get to, like, engage with that history, right? It's humbling, but also you're becoming a part of that legacy. And you'll be making history. Ashley, as will you. And I want to talk with you a little bit about the application process and not necessarily the logistics. But for you, you know, what was it like, what advice do you have to folks who are on this webinar just like you were last year, what advice do you have to them about how to prepare to apply if they're having any doubts or concerns? You mentioned that, you know, sometimes you can be insecure. Like, what advice do you have for them? And what, if anything, do you wish you knew then that you know now?

Ashley: Yeah, I would say first and foremost, doubt, insecurity, fear, those are all very, like, natural human emotions and so to welcome them and that's okay. That's what happens when you are in a period of growth and going to law school and applying for applications and programs like this. Like, that is very necessary. So move through those feelings and go forward and just don't let them be something that's going to stop or prohibit you from going closer to your goals and your dreams. And so I would say that would be the thing that I needed to hear last year after listening to this webinar. I did some sleuthing and went on like different scholars, LinkedIn. And you get a little insecure about, you see some of the accolades and the merits of some of these current scholars and the amount of work that they have done and they're brilliant, brilliant individuals. And so you can start to compare yourself. But I think the thing that is so amazing about Marshall-Motley and makes it such a dynamic program is that they're looking for individuals that have their differences of experiences of life, of different educational backgrounds, and they want to create cohorts and ultimately these 50 legion of attorneys practicing in the South that are different, and what they bring to this work will be impactful together for as a collaborative unit. And so really capitalize on those things that make you stand out and make you different. A huge insecurity that I had was being non-traditional and starting law school at 30 and feeling a little bit behind

the curve in that aspect. And I think I had to really capitalize on that and say, but at my core I am someone that wants to help people at my core. This work has always been something that has been near and dear to my heart. And I had shown that commitment. And I think know that you have a place in this work and your calling is yours and it's unique to you. And because this work is what is needed to move this work forward is so intricate. We need a dynamic and collaborative movement. And I think know that your place is valid, especially within Marshall-Motley and would love to have a lot of you guys apply.

Angela: Wonderful. Thank you so much. And thank you for really underlying that commitment and passion and being able to connect with that to help drive you forward when you might have insecurities, or doubts, or questioning yourself. It's so important to remember why you're doing this, and that you have that call, and you have that connection, and you're going to really be a part of history, and laying down that legacy. One last question for you, Ashley, and we'll have to keep this brief because I do need to get back to Adria so we can learn the logistics of how to get involved and apply for this. But what have you learned about yourself by going through the application process and your first year of law school?

Ashley: Yeah, I say the application process because it is so rigorous and there are multiple short answers and videos that you're doing. And it constantly keeps asking your why. And I think that the closer you can get to it, the more clarity and conviction you can have in your why is really going to help you move through, not just Marshall-Motley applications but also your law school applications. And it has helped me to ground myself this 1L semester, this first semester when it does get tough. And there had been evenings go later and later. I'm studying until midnight or later. I have to ground myself in my why. And I think doing the application process and asking myself, why do I want to be an attorney? Why do I want to do this work? I was able to very much understand that my why was to help bring healing to the Black community through advocacy and through legal activism. And doing this process, you feel you can, again, you get that clarity and conviction on what you're saying and you have to say it over and over and over again. And you're saying it to some luminaries that have been doing this work. And it definitely helps you to... I knew if I got it I would be, you know, my life would change. But if I didn't get it, I still was very much closer to what grounded me and why I was doing this work. And so I think that's the biggest thing is helping me identify and clearly identify what my why was.

Angela: Thank you. Thank you both so much, Ashley and Victor. Not only for taking the time but, like, really sharing authentically about your experiences, and your stories, and

your journey. And also just thank you for doing this work and really living into your commitment and passion. I think Victor was, you said it was a beacon of hope, this program, and it is. And both of you really live that and you're both beacons of hope for me. I'm so glad that you're in the program and that you're pursuing a career in law. Okay, so stay with us because we're going to have time for questions and there may be questions for the two of you. But I'm going to move back to Adria so we can learn about how to actually apply for this program, what the process is for this year, and what things look like. Because if I know I'm certainly convinced, and every year I'm even more convinced about the value and benefit of this program. But let's get into the nitty gritty details. So Adria, can you talk about this year's selection process and what that looks like?

Adria: Sure, Angela, happy to do that. But also just want to underscore the thanks that you've expressed to Ashley and Victor. I've just continue to be moved and inspired by our scholars and certainly Ashley and Victor are great examples of that, just illuminating that beacon of hope that for themselves individually and for the communities that they will serve. And we're excited to recruit and to review applications for this next cycle. Looking for our fourth cohort of scholars. So, I'll share a few slides just to give you some additional information about what we're looking for. I heard Ashley describe the process as rigorous. And certainly, I think that's one way to put it, but I also appreciate her point.

The process and the application is intentional. It is designed to invite those questions that Ashley talked about the why and getting you to reflect because in addition to the benefits that the program provides, there is also a commitment. So after the three years of law school and the two-year fellowship, each Marshall-Motley Scholar commits to practicing civil rights law in pursuit of racial justice alongside Black communities in the South for an eight-year period. So we're looking for people who have demonstrated a commitment to this work. So in terms of eligibility, we'll move to the next slide to get an understanding of who we are looking for this year. So for this application cycle, we're looking for people who, first of all, will have a bachelor's degree by September of 2024 and who will begin law school in the fall of 2024. So if you are someone who is applying for law school in this cycle, you would be eligible for our program and applying for our program this year. Certainly, we are looking for people who are going to be admitted to law school, so that's important, but you don't have to be admitted to law school at the time that you submit. So keep that in mind. Certainly, you want to be in pursuit of that.

To be eligible, you do have to include test scores. So you'll want to have taken a admissible test by January so that you will be able to to meet our deadline. But again, folks who are going through the admission cycle this year and who also are either a US

citizen and/or a permanent resident, have permanent resident status, and that is primarily because of the work requirements and the link of time that we are looking for people to make the commitment and we want to be able to ensure that they will fulfill that. So in the next slide, we talk a little bit about the components of the application. So certainly, our application mirrors the law school application in many ways. So you'll see familiar things like personal statements, test scores, resumes, et cetera, your transcripts, letters of recommendation, which we ask for too. There's also an essay though that's specific to the mission of this program where you'll be asked to discuss your commitment to working for racial justice on behalf of and alongside Black people in the South. So that's important. And that's a thread we like to see throughout the application, whether it be your personal statement, your letters of recommendation, et cetera. We're looking for people who have that demonstrated commitment to the pursuit of racial justice. And then on the next slide, we have the additional components of the application, which include video submissions, which Ashley alluded to already. So the video that has been the signature of the application for the last three years is the three-minute video and it's three-minute max. It could certainly be less. But the question is, how are you currently living the life of a Marshall-Motley scholar? Which may seem odd I guess in the application phase, but I think what it does is it hones in on really what we're looking for.

I think Ashley and Victor both talked about work that they were doing before law school. Ashley talked about the fact that whether she had been selected for this program or not, this was the work that she was going to be doing. And so that's what we're looking to see in the application and certainly in that video submission as well. How are you currently pursuing racial justice? How are you currently working alongside Black communities? Those are the things that we want to see and that that video prompt is seeking to elicit. In addition to that, we have a new piece to our application this year with some short answer video questions. These are very, very quick questions. Some of them are questions that have been our previous application, but we are allowing people to do those in a video format where you'll respond to a series of three questions with one minute or less in that timeframe. Of course, we also have an online application as well and so you will just complete those pieces of information. The online application also has an instructional video there that will help walk you through what you can expect in the application. There's also an application guide there to guide you through each component of the application.

And then finally, we do have a request for demographic information at the very end. That information is optional, but it helps us ensure that we are reaching a variety of demographics and gives us an additional sense of insight on the applicants for our pool

each year. So on the next slide, you'll see the timeline for this application cycle. So I'm excited that we have already opened our application. So if this is something that you're interested in, you can go ahead and go to our website and begin on your application today. The application opened on November 1, so you can go ahead, log in, get a sense of what the application looks like. The application will be open until February 2, which is the deadline February 2, 2024. And we're happy to engage with you during that period. I'm actually sitting here in Durham, North Carolina in a hotel room doing some recruitment here. So if there are individuals who are connected with campuses and would love to have a virtual webinar in person, certainly please feel free to reach out to us. While our application is open, you can also go back and edit at any time. So if you started that application, and even if you've submitted, you can go back if you want to make edits. That's something that we welcome during the period. But after the application closes, we will begin review and we will select our finalist by March. And those individuals selected for the final round, we'll do interviews this year. I'm excited to say that we, for the first time, we'll be doing in-person interviews. For the obvious reasons, COVID, et cetera, they have been virtual. But this year, we will be doing in-person interviews. And we look forward to April and to April of 2024 when we will select our fourth cohort of Marshall-Motley Scholars that we will select and then introduce to the world. So we are incredibly excited about this application cycle. Excited to share information with you today and certainly welcome questions from the audience for myself or for our scholars.

Angela: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that, Adria. And I'm going to ask you probably at least two more times. So when is the deadline to apply?

Adria: The deadline is February 2, 2024.

Angela: All right, and applications are open now so folks can get started. Wonderful. Well, now it is time for all of you. We know we've got some questions in the queue there. I'm going to turn to our wonderful support team behind the scenes from LSAC and LDF. Could you come on and give us a question that is in the queue?

Christine: One question from Kendall, it said, "The scholarships can sometimes lead to more stress depending on the requisites. Is there a minimum GPA requirement to maintain throughout law school for those who are selected to join the program?"

Angela: Adria, that's all for you.

Adria: Yeah, thanks, Christine. I love this question. I got a similar question yesterday on a panel. The answer is no. And that's something that I'm excited about in the sense that,

you know, I guess the underlying point of the question to remove that stress. So as long as a scholar is in good standing with their law school, they are in good standing with us from an academic perspective. And you're right, there are other institutional scholarships that require GPA minimums. And certainly, we want our students, our scholars to be high achieving and to do their very best. But we do not have a minimum GPA requirement to maintain a status as Marshall-Motley Scholar.

Angela: That is fabulous. And it reminds me of the joke, right? Like, what do you call a person who graduates at the bottom of their law school class? Attorney, [laughs] right? And it's not that they didn't give their best or that you shouldn't give your best or shouldn't try, but I think it's so critical, Adria, that added pressure, you know, do your best and that's what's really needed for practicing. All right, another question.

Christine: And this one is for Ashley and Victor. Donovan says, "Thank you so much for sharing. Can you share what you plan to do after graduation? Is there a specific field, region, or type of practice or firm that you plan to work with?"

Angela: Victor, do you want to start?

Victor: Sure, I can start. So I haven't nailed down my post-graduation plans just yet. I'm in the process of doing that now. I will say that every organization that I'm speaking with is Florida centric or I will be working on Florida centric issues, right? So as we know, Florida has a lot of anti-truth issues going on right now. Anti-woke laws where classes that I took as a student in high school are not being offered anymore because our governor has decided that Black and Brown students don't deserve to know the truth about their history and institutional racism and the like or anti protest. There are laws in Florida right now or laws coming down the pipeline that try to infringe upon folks' First Amendment rights to gather and to protest laws like the ones that are coming down the pipeline. And so my plans are to engage in work back home. There is never a shortage of work in Florida, as we all know as Ashley. I see you nodding your head. But yeah, I am nailing down my fellowship process right now and so I should know where I'll be within the next couple weeks or so.

Angela: All right, thank you. And yep, there is plenty of work to do to ensure access, equity, fairness, and justice, and we're glad you're doing the work. And Ashley, what about you? What do you have your eyes set on for your fellowship and position down the road? You got little ways to go to get there, but what do you have in mind? Because I'm sure you have a goal and something in that you're envisioning for yourself.

Ashley: Yeah, I think so the area that I plan to focus on as far as civil rights is criminal justice reform. I had the opportunity to work in the public defender's office in Augusta, Georgia. And so working with clients in the jail have just really opened my eyes and my heart to clients that are incarcerated and just Black and Brown people that are incarcerated and just making sure that the human conditions are up to standard. And so that is definitely my lens right now is criminal justice reform. But I'm open. I'm still in my 1L year. So still open to all aspects of civil rights. And I would say as far as the region, I'm from Florida from Tallahassee, but my family is from Southwest Georgia and Albany and Americus, Georgia. So that is a part of my heart as well. So kind of torn between the two states right now.

Angela: Okay, wonderful. Thank you. Going back to the team, do we have another question lined up?

Christine: Here's one question for you, Ashley. Sorry. [chuckles] But someone asked, "How can one best prepare to apply for this program since you are a recent addition?"

Ashley: Yeah, so I mean, the benefit is that it is going along with the law school application season. So you're already working on your personal statements. You're getting your, already have your transcripts, your recommendations as well. I would say the best way to prepare it is to really think about, I'm going to sound like a broken record, is to think about your why and why you want to do this work in particular. This is a 13-year commitment, and I say that loudly. It's 13 years. So three years of law school, a two-year fellowship, and eight years of practice in civil rights in the South. So knowing that that is something that you envision yourself doing that aligns with your goals and your purpose of being an attorney, I think that's first and foremost. And then thinking about, you know, who are those people in your life that are going to be those recommendations that can also attest to that. Because you want to, just like your law school application, set your application up for the best, you know, view in the best light. And I would say, you know, thank God for Marshall-Motley and not having a metric requirement as far as the LSAT, but also making sure that you are in a good position to get into law school as well. So making sure that is a focus because you do have to be admitted into a law school before you can become a scholar.

Angela: And Adria, I'm going to toss it over to you just in case you have anything else to add because I know you've seen many, many of these applications. That's what you do. What additional guidance do you have for folks who are preparing to do their applications now?

Adria: I think the response that Ashley gave was perfect. I would just add to be intentional because again, a lot of the application materials are very similar to what you would use for your law school application and that makes sense. But to also be intentional about pulling the thread through each portion of the application to highlight and emphasize your commitment and your interest in racial justice. I'd also add, because I'm looking, I'm working on the Q & A as well and I will highlight, there are several questions about, you know, do you have to have a certain LSAT score and those kinds of things. And that is not the case. The way in which we have defined merit for the purposes of our program is around the commitment to racial justice and the commitment to working alongside Black communities in the South. And so while we want to make sure that we have test scores because we want to make sure we have applicants who are viable candidates for a law schools. Certainly, in fact, once we get to the review stage for the applications and we have a committee, they never see test scores. Our focus is on the commitment. So I wanted to make sure and address that specifically because I saw it several times in the Q & A.

Angela: Wonderful. Thank you for that. Throwing it back over to the team. Can we get another question from the audience?

Christine: Sure. Adria, maybe you can answer this. There's some individuals who are not certain of the kind of law they want to practice, but should they still apply for the program?

Adria: I would say that anyone who has an inkling that this could be for them should apply. I think that hopefully something in today's conversation resonated with you, whether it's what you heard from the scholars, what you heard from me. And we know that this is a very sort of exploratory, I guess phase of where people are as they're applying to law school. So if it's something that you're thinking about, you should apply. I will say those candidates that are the most successful in the application process are those who have clarity around it, particularly because of the commitment. I mean Ashley laid it out very explicitly. And so we are looking for people who have, maybe they don't know which way they want to do it. I saw some questions in the chat about sort of the intersectionality of the law, which to me is one of the beautiful things about civil rights. So certainly, that could be, you know, criminal law, but we've got students who are interested in environmental justice or economic justice where there's overlap with wills and trusts and tax and so many things. And so we welcome that type of diversity. But certainly, again, you know, we select 10 scholars each year. And the ones I think who have been the most successful are those who have clarity around the commitment they want to do.

Angela: Thank you. And I think we have time for maybe one more question.

Christine: I'll try to capture this. Victor, this is for you. Someone is asking, "What is one of the elements in your application that you believe made you stand out from your peers?" And then if you or Ashley can shortly just touch on what the relationship is like between Marshall-Motley Scholars.

Victor: Sure, I can tackle both quickly. That's a hard, the first question is a hard question because when I applied, this program had not been in existence. There had not been people to which to compare myself with after the fact. But I think what was significant about my application was simply that I had been doing the work on behalf of Black people for a demonstrated amount of time throughout my academic and professional careers as an undergrad, as class president of Progressive Black Men Incorporated at Florida State. The community service that we engaged in the primarily Black neighborhood of Frenchtown or working with the Urban League as an emergency manager so that they could continue to provide services to communities even in times of emergency or working as a Saturday paralegal at the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation and working on landlord tenant issues for low income Atlantans.

And then finally, at the Orleans Public Defenders, I had a demonstrated commitment that, and I identified my why. I knew why I was doing it. I knew that growing up the criminal legal system had turned my community and my family and my friends upside down. I knew that I wanted to do this work in the South. And I had done it in several states of the South. So I had my why and Marshall-Motley made sense as a how, how I would change my communities. And I reflected that within my application, I think. And yeah, as far as just having my cohort members and cohorts two and three, I tell Adria all the time. I said, "You ain't going to be able to do it again. Because cohort one is just special. You ain't going to be able to create that again." You know, and I would sit there. I would brag to her. You know, and I actually had to eat my words because cohorts two and three, I mean, they did it again. They did it thrice over. I don't know how. I think it was collusion, but basically it's great. I roomed with three other members basically from cohorts two this summer in Miami. And I really got to know them. I really got to grow with them. And the summers are a terrific opportunity for that because you're working in the same cities. You might be working at the same organization as other members of different cohorts. And so you really get to learn with them, grow with them, have experiences with them. We went out together. We cooked together. It was just really cool to grow with them. And then lastly, we have a retreat every year in North Carolina and admin is great about setting that up. And it's full of such rich experiences and development and just bonding. And so yeah, it's been great.



Angela: And Ashley, if you want to add on to that as briefly as you can. What was the experience like for you in developing relationships with the other scholars?

Ashley: Yeah, I'll echo a lot of what Victor said. You know, everyone, every cohort has their, you know, Victor's cohort is the first, so they're the inaugural. We have like the three. So you have that camaraderie within your cohort. But I would say it's just, it's amazing to have other law students across the country at other law schools that you can depend on and also ask questions of. And we all have a mutual WhatsApp that we're all in and we constantly lift each other up and also just celebrate one another. So there is definitely that feeling of community that where law school can feel like a very solitary place. You have that comradery amongst your cohorts.

Angela: Fantastic. And in our last two minutes, Adria, I do want to give you a chance to do a final thought before I close us out. So Adria, would you please give us your thought?

Adria: Thank you, Angela. And thanks to the scholars and all of the attendees. I will just, and I think similar to the way that we ended last year, which Ashley reminded me, yes, you has been sort of the tagline for our program, because so many times prospective applicants will count themselves out and will assume that this program could not be for them. And I assure you, yes, you, like, you could be that person. Every single year when we select our scholars, at least half say, "Oh my gosh, I never thought that I would be the one to be selected." And we are not looking for one cookie-cutter type of applicant. We are looking for each applicant to bring the breadth and the wealth of their lived experiences to this community, this vibrant community of scholars that has already developed and who will enter the profession in pursuit of racial justice in ways that I am convinced will change the world. Victor said it, you know, we thought too we couldn't replicate cohort one. And again and again, we are just thrilled and excited to receive applications from each, each cycle of folks who are committed to doing this work. So if this is something that resonates you, I encourage you, do not hesitate. Please apply. We look forward to receiving your application and hearing more about your commitment.

Angela: Fantastic. There is so much talent out there. And for you who are listening to this webinar, that could be you. You could be a part of laying this history, laying this legacy, and doing the good work of civil rights. Ashley said it very clearly, it's a 13-year commitment, but I love the parallelism of the 13-year commitment building on the 13th Amendment. There's so much work to be done and it is just our pleasure here at LSAC to highlight the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program to partner with you, Adria, on this webinar. And thank you again to the scholars for taking the time. And thank you



participants for showing up and learning about these opportunities. That's what LSAC is here for.

And I encourage you to check out our website, LSAC.org, as well as LawHub.org. We are here to promote access, equity, and fairness in law school admissions, but also more importantly, to support you along your prelaw to practice journeys. Thank you so much. Have a wonderful day and I wish all of you the best in your journeys. And don't forget the deadline. February 2, 2024. Applications are open now. Get started and remember, best of luck to you. Thank you.

Announcer: Learn more at LSAC.org.