

ALEXIS McNEAL
BIO FOR THE
2022 ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON LEGACY FUND SCHOLARSHIP

The legal field is a treasure trove for any civilization. In this field, the entire recorded history of any space at any time is tucked away, waiting for curious minds to discover the bounty. It is a place where society's greatest thinkers have gathered their thoughts, produced an opinion, then, altered the course of history forever. These opinions build upon each other. Case by case, the identity of the culture is sculpted until atlas, we have a complete body of work.

In America, the opinions that have sculpted the culture have not always gotten it right. Much of this is because of the lack of diversity of the decisionmakers. For many years, the leaders of America have been white men. Therefore, much of the culture is shaped around a white male paradigm. As times have changed, some laws have changed, and advancements have been made. However, there are so many collateral consequences that have resulted. These consequences include but are limited to, wealth distribution, property distribution, prison disparities, limiting education opportunities and overall systemic racism.

As a member of the African Diaspora, I have seen the effects of this firsthand. It began in school, through the writings of American literary giants like Langston Hughes, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, W.E.B. Dubois, and Zora Neale Hurston. There was always a warning tone to their writings, it was never quite free. It progressed from words to examples as demonstrated by various civil rights movements, documentaries, murders. Along the line it became a complete reality. This demonstrated itself by attitudes I've encountered, arrests I've witnessed, brutal situations I've watched.

Through it all, one thing has remained unchanged, the power of the law. Law is a powerful tool that allows people to be able to defend themselves. Understanding the rules, makes for a better player of the game. I have decided to pursue a law degree because it equips me with the ability to help when and where I am needed. As a law student, I have been able to assist people in my community through various forms of advocacy. One important way is through my work in the clinics at UDC Law. In these clinics, I have advocated for property owners, small business owners, people charged with misdemeanor offenses, and beyond. By aiding, I have seen the powerful impact of a legal education.

I believe I should receive an award from the Eleanor Holmes Norton Legacy Fund scholarship because it would allow me to continue to fulfill the mission of commitment to community through public service. This is work that I have done throughout my life, school matriculation and intend to do beyond. This scholarship will assist me in contributing to the work of my predecessors for our communities.