



NEW LEADER SCHOLAR BIOS 2004

CINDY BICK obtained a Bachelor's degree in Organismal and Conservational Biology from San Jose State University and is now a doctoral student in the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Program at the University of Michigan. Cindy was born in American Samoa and moved to California in order to attend school here. She states that she comes "from a culture in which women aren't encouraged to pursue an education beyond high school". Though her mother is illiterate and her family of origin continues to be poor, her mother encouraged Cindy to continue her education. She is interested in understanding the feminist movement in relation to issues of class and race, having witnessed considerable violence against women in her formative years. In the summer of 2009 she taught tropical biology in Costa Rica and plans to continue her research in that area. In recent years, Cindy's studies have focused primarily on research in tropical ecology.

KEN COEHLO graduated from U.C., Berkeley with a major in psychology while simultaneously taking pre-med course work at San Francisco State University. He earned a Master's Degree from the Global Health Studies Graduate Program at UC, San Francisco last spring. Ken and his family immigrated to the United States from a small town in India, having spent the first eight years of his life in the Middle East before returning to his home. While in India, he had extensive experience working with terminally ill cancer patients at a hospice. Subsequently, Ken volunteered in Romania, distributing warm food, blankets and medication to orphans and homeless children in transit for adoption. At U.C., Berkeley, he was a dynamic force in developing a number of volunteer programs for medically underserved populations along with co-founding a Cal undergraduate public health coalition. Until leaving for England this fall to enter the M.Ph. /Ph.D. program in Public Health at Cambridge University, he worked for the San Francisco Department of Public Health. As part of his work to expand health care to the underserved in San Francisco, he published a paper on identifying telemedicine services to improve access to Specialty Care for the underserved.

APRIL JOY DAMIAN graduated with a B. A. in Ethnic Studies from U. C., Berkeley, and is currently a third year student at Harvard Medical School and has just begun her MBA Program there as well. As a Filipina, first-generation college student, coming from a background of poverty, she has a profound commitment to help others with similar backgrounds through a variety of mentoring programs. April has engaged in extensive outreach work through her church from the time that, she, herself, was a potential dropout as a young teenager. Her senior thesis was on cardiovascular disease in the Pilipino community. As a considerable honor, she was asked to be the sole speaker at the graduation exercise for the Pilipino community. April received a Truman Scholarship in 2005, spending a year at the VA hospital in Washington D.C. Since 2007 she has been active on several fronts, all exploring her deep concerns about public health in the Filipino community. She has worked with the Bridges to Health Program of the Greenlining Institute in Berkeley and in several mentorship programs through UC, Berkeley and Berkeley City College.

ASHLEY DUNN - See 2006 entry (awarded a second New Leader Scholarship)

SVETLANA LUNSKAYA VAHAB graduated from law school at U.C., Berkeley, having been an exchange student at Harvard Law School for her third year. She and her family emigrated from Russia in 1991 to escape institutionalized anti-Semitism. Svetlana graduated with high honors from U.C., Berkeley, earning a B.A. in the Economics of Industrial Societies. As both an undergraduate and law school student, she has volunteered her services to human rights organizations. As she speaks Spanish fluently, while an undergraduate, she worked to help Latino prisoners be released on their own recognizance. She worked with the California Asylum Rights Clinic, and once again, joined her skills as a fluent Spanish speaker with her skills as a law student, to help families from Latin America seek asylum in the United States. Currently, she is working for the Department of Justice in the Office of Immigration Litigation. She was the first person to be awarded a scholarship for graduate school and to receive three New Leader Scholarships. Lana was married in 2009 and continues to reside in Washington, D.C.

FELICIA MOORE-JORDAN - See 2007 entry (awarded a third New Leader Scholarship)

FARHAD SALEHIAN graduated from U.C., Berkeley with majors in Inter-Disciplinary Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies. Emigrating from Iran with his parents in 1987, he grew up in a low-income household, and is the first person to attend college in his family. While at Saddleback Community College, he was elected to student government, where he began to develop his interest in conflict resolution. With his mentor at U.C., Berkeley, he developed a campus-wide mechanism to address inter-student conflict, thus expanding his interest in conflict resolution to an even greater degree. He received the Kenneth Priestley Award for “outstanding student leadership and invaluable contributions to student welfare”, an award given to only one student in the graduating class. For two summers, he participated in the Caux Scholars Program in Caux Switzerland, which brings together approximately 20 students from around the world to study conflict resolution intensively. After acquiring American citizenship, he returned to Iran for the first time and is now back in the United States working in the Bay Area. He is an Account Manager at the “Give Something Back” office supply company in the Bay Area. The company donates the majority of its profits to charities and nonprofits.

CHRISTYNA SERRANO, (See 2012 entry, awarded a sixth New Leader Scholarship)

MICHAEL TSIA, a two-time recipient of the New Leader Scholarship, graduated in May, 2006, with majors in political science and business administration from U.C., Berkeley. He was active in a number of campus activities including that of Peer Advisor in the residence halls and was president of the Undergraduate Political Science Association. Being evicted illegally and made destitute at the age of eight and losing most of the family possessions, has made Michael a committed advocate of tenants' rights. While in college, Michael created a Housing Advocacy Group, dedicated to educating students about the importance of rent ordinances and housing boards. He has completed his Master's Degree in Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School. Currently, Michael is working for a management consultant firm in California, dedicated to improving health care delivery in the United States. Michael is currently assigned to a hospital in Orange County, California and is working on a program to improve the community's access to neonatal care.

RICARDO VALENCIA graduated from U.C., Berkeley with a Bachelor's Degree in Ethnic Studies and a minor in Education, having spent a semester studying in Brazil. As a McNair Scholar, a program which prepares and encourages underrepresented students of color to pursue doctoral studies, he was able to clarify his long term ambition of entering graduate school in an educational leadership program. His experiences "growing up below the poverty line" have shaped his commitment to issues of social justice leading to a summer educational internship with an Iron Worker's Union in Sacramento. He completed a one-year fellowship with the Greenlining Institute, a multi-ethnic institute, focusing on issues that affect low-income communities of color. Following his fellowship, Ricardo was accepted into the Master's Program in Educational Leadership at Tufts University. Three years ago, he received his social studies credential and completed his Master's Degree. Ricardo lived in Boston for two years teaching Ethnic Studies and History in a pilot public high school that emphasizes collaboration between the faculty and its underserved community. As of this fall, his dream has come true and he has been able to return to his community of Santa Maria, teaching in the high school that became his touchstone for believing he could become an educator and provide leadership to underserved students of color. He has received two New Leader Scholarships.