

# Advocacy Corps

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## FCNL Welcomes the 2023-2024 Advocacy Corps

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### **Ariana Perez**

Dallas, TX

Ariana is a graduate of Eastern Connecticut State University, where she majored in political science. She is an aspiring law school student and currently holds the position of programs manager at a Dallas-based nonprofit organization focused on civic engagement and resource allocation. In addition, Ariana is a skilled proposal writer and a passionate advocate for her community. Her goal is to foster greater equity and civic consciousness by bridging communities of color with essential resources. Through her work, she aims to enhance the overall well-being and empowerment of her communities.

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### **Ashley Myers**

Denver, CO

Ashley Myers resides in Denver and is a Colorado FCNL Advocacy Team member. Ashley has worked in local nonprofit organizations as an advocate for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. She is proud to now serve her community as a case manager for survivors of human trafficking. Ashley has been an FCNL Spring Lobby Weekend attendee for seven years, leading multiple delegations along the way. Born and raised in Colorado, she loves hiking, camping, gardening, and spending time in the great outdoors.

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### **Avela Chiya**

Greensboro, NC

Avela Chiya is a Guilford College senior majoring in political science with a minor in peace and conflict studies. On campus, Avela serves as a peer mentor for first-year students, writes for the student newspaper, and works in the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement. Recently, she co-founded a farmers market at her school to address the high rates of food insecurity among college students. Off-campus, Avela has spent the last few years interning at local nonprofits that serve Greensboro's immigrant and refugee communities.



## **Brenda Ochoa**

Seattle, WA

Brenda Ochoa, a proud Chicana, is a student at the University of Washington, pursuing a degree in education, communities, and organizations (ECO) with a minor in diversity. She is currently making a difference as a program director at the Equity Institute, where she serves underrepresented youth in her state. Brenda's advocacy work focuses on immigration reform, education, reproductive justice, women's rights, and youth rights. Recently, she was a delegation leader at FCNL's Spring Lobby Weekend, urging Congress to allocate at least \$20 million in federal funding for violence interrupters in the FY2024 appropriations bill, aiming to create safer communities for all.

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## **Ceila Rodriguez**

Medford, OR

Ceila Rodriguez is from Medford, Oregon. She recently graduated from Southern Oregon University, where she majored in education with a special education minor. She is hoping to attend graduate school and further her learning in the field of special education.

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## **Emily Kramer**

Marlton, NJ

Emily Kramer is a recent graduate from Stockton University in New Jersey with two B.A. degrees: political science and language & culture studies. She revived her university's Amnesty International group and served as the group's student coordinator for two years of activism. She also was the vice president for her school's Model United Nations team and was on the international team that traveled to Kobe, Japan. She was also a student activist coordinator for Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), where she helped other AIUSA student groups lead their activist groups.

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## **Fisto Ndayishimiye**

Concord, NH

Fisto Ndayishimiye is a passionate advocate for education, leadership, and social justice. Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Fisto came to the United States in 2016 with a mission to empower young people. As a lead organizer for Change for Concord, he hosts youth leadership events that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Fisto works to bring awareness to these issues through interviews and discussions with community leaders. He also develops programs for youth, focusing on leadership, economic development, and advocacy. Fisto's dedication to creating equitable education and resources for all residents drives his work with local leaders. He is working towards starting his law school education and continues to advocate for positive change. He recently served as a delegation leader at FCNL's Spring Lobby Weekend, lobbying lawmakers to support an additional \$20 million in funding for violence interrupters in the FY2024 appropriations bill. He plans to continue advocacy and engaging other young people in the years to come.



## **Garrett Simmons**

Wilmington, OH

Garrett Simmons is from the village of Frankfort, Ohio. He is a junior, studying agronomy and food policy at Wilmington College. Some of his other focuses include Farmhouse Fraternity, Collegiate Farm Bureau, Aggies and Collegiate 4-H, and the Wilmington College wrestling team. He is currently organizing to discuss rural broadband infrastructure in the upcoming Farm Bill. Garrett hopes that his time with FCNL will give him the skills to make change possible.

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## **Glen Cote**

Acton, MA

Glen Cote is a political advocate and organizer living in Acton, Massachusetts. He does not support the military industrial complex. Glen is co-chair of Massachusetts Peace Action's legislative/political committee and has lobbied for peace legislation at the state and federal level. Graduating magna cum laude with a bachelors in computer science from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, Glen has found that his technical background in scrutinizing the shortcomings of poorly written computer programs has prepared him well for effectively navigating the bureaucratic machinery of legislative bodies. He enjoys Dungeons and Dragons, International Folk Dancing, Spiritual Quaker retreats, and hot turmeric tea.

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## **Jesus Martin**

San Diego, CA

Passionate about human rights and immigration and international law, Jesus Martin serves his community as a legal assistant with Al Otro Lado, where he works with asylum seekers and refugees seeking justice. As a young adult, he serves as youth commissioner for the City of San Diego and is vice chair of the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) Trustee Advisory Council, where he advocates for the representation and empowerment of opportunity youth in marginalized communities. Jesus Martin recently graduated from the University of California San Diego with a B.A. in international politics and a B.A. in Latin American studies.

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## **Joanna Valdez Castro**

Vista, CA

Joanna Valdez Castro is a first-generation Latina, who recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science from California State University San Marcos. She hopes to use her knowledge to advocate for policies that help uplift marginalized and disadvantaged communities in southern California, specifically the undocumented community. Joanna has been actively involved in grassroots campaign work at the local and congressional level and served as a district office intern for her state representative. Joanna hopes to inspire her community to step into their power through the FCNL Advocacy Corps Program.



## **Kate Jackowski**

South Bend, IN

Kate Jackowski is from Aurora, Colorado, and is a senior at the University of Notre Dame, where she is studying economics and pre-health studies with a minor in theology. Kate serves as the Notre Dame Student Government director of Community Outreach and as the Indiana district governor of Circle K International, an on-campus service organization. She is passionate about fighting for human rights and is especially interested in working to combat the issues of drug addiction and homelessness. She is excited to get more involved in the public policy sphere and develop her advocacy skills this year.

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## **Leah Kadlecek**

Canton, OH

Leah Kadlecek is a senior at the University of Mount Union, located in northeast Ohio. She is studying political science and sociology with hopes of working as an attorney one day, providing free or affordable legal services. Outside of school, Leah works with adults who have developmental disabilities and volunteers her time at numerous organizations that promote justice and equality for all. She is passionate about giving a voice to those who have been silenced and is currently advocating to help end the death penalty in Ohio. In her free time, she loves watching reality TV shows and spending time with her friends and family.

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## **Maria Torres Menes**

New Brunswick, NJ

Maria is a senior at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, New Jersey, majoring in chemistry with a sociology minor. She is from New Brunswick, New Jersey, where she was raised. Maria hopes to learn more through lobbying for FCNL Advocacy Corps to bring back ideas to her community. She is involved in student affairs through LASO (Latin American Service Organization) & RAIIS (Reaching After Immigrant Intellect & Success). She is involved with various issues, but immigration is the main focal point through RAIIS. She hopes to learn more about politics and get more involved in her community with a better understanding of it. She enjoys going on walks and listening to music and getting to meet new people.



## **Materrinan Zehyoue**

Baton Rouge, LA

Materrinan Zehyoue is proudly serving her community in New Orleans, Louisiana. She is a second-generation Liberian and a lifelong Louisiana resident, bringing five years of professional experience as an administrative program coordinator in nonprofit organizations. She received a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a minor in sociology from Loyola University in New Orleans. Materrinan is now pursuing a master's degree in theology at Xavier University of Louisiana, where she hopes to apply theological principles of reconciliation and restorative justice to transform the criminal legal system. She is excited to learn about the policy-making process and advocate with FCNL to support peace-building efforts. She hopes to create policies that prevent gun violence, foster community healing, and interrupt the cycle of mass incarceration.

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## **Olivia Mikkelsen**

Sarasota, FL

Olivia Mikkelsen is a second-year psychology and anthropology student at the New College of Florida in Sarasota. Over the summer, Olivia worked as the Young Adult Advocacy and Programming intern. She grew up and has stayed active in her local Quaker community, through attending New England Yearly Meeting and young adult programming with South Eastern Yearly Meeting. Olivia has been an active leader on several campaigns with the Student PIRGs [Public Service Research Groups], and more recently working with the League of Women Voters (LWV) to create the second collegiate LWV chapter. In the fall, she will work as the student Education Policy Committee representative and will work with the student government and Advocacy Corps programming to advocate for student voices.

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## **Robert "Bobby" Palmer**

Chesterfield, VA

Robert Palmer is a resident of Chesterfield, Virginia, and a dedicated student currently pursuing his education at Brightpoint Community College, where he is entering his third semester. Alongside his studies, Robert actively engages in civic duties as a poll worker during elections, ensuring the integrity of the democratic process. Robert's passion for political engagement extends beyond the voting booth, as he actively participates in phone banking initiatives with organizations like Vote Save America. He demonstrates his advocacy further by voicing his concerns at county board of supervisor meetings, advocating against harmful rezoning efforts. Robert is driven by a strong sense of community and a desire to positively impact the world around him.



## Saanvi Mukkara

Frisco, TX

Saanvi Mukkara is a senior at Independence High School, with a passion for business and advocacy. She's involved in national advocacy movements and serves multiple leadership roles both inside and outside her community. She has organized protests and peaceful demonstrations in nearly seven cities across Texas, presented literature to the Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) Commission at the White House, presented legislation to the U.S. Congress, introduced business strategy research to an international conference, and most recently served as one of the youngest delegates to the United Nations Convention on the Status of Women 67. An aspiring management consultant and advocate, she strives to intertwine her passions for advocacy and business to reform and evolve the environments she works in. She loves traveling and spending time with friends and family and can be found biking, baking, or watching movies in her free time.

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## Sophie Garner

Portland, ME

Sophie Elizabeth Garner (she/her) is a proud activist and community leader currently residing in Portland, Maine. She graduated from the University of Southern Maine with a bachelor's degree in political science in May 2022 and is working towards a master's degree in public policy at Northeastern University. Prior to joining FCNL's Advocacy Corps, Sophie was FCNL's Maine ambassador for Economic Justice and has spent the last year lobbying for the extension and expansion of the Child Tax Credit. In addition to the work Sophie has done for FCNL, she has worked alongside various grassroots organizations in Maine, such as the Maine Democratic Socialists of America and Inclusion Maine, in order to advocate for issues that are important to her community.

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## Ungwa Itabelo

Des Moines, IA

Ungwa Itabelo is a rising senior at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa. Her passion for social change led her to major in liberal arts and work with the International Rescue Committee to help refugees and immigrants transition to a new country. As the next Advocacy Corps member at FCNL, she is excited to continue pursuing her passion for social justice by advocating for change at the policy level.

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