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Monica Porter of Wayne State Wins Smiley Student Travel Award

Monica Porter, a student in the online Masters of Library and Information Sciences program at Wayne State University, is the winner of the 2015 Smiley Travel Award, sponsored by the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. The award gives Porter a \$500 stipend to attend BCALA's 9th National Conference of African American Librarians, to be held in St. Louis, Mo. from Aug. 4-8, 2015. The winner is chosen via an essay contest, with essays judged by a review committee within BCALA.

Porter, currently a library assistant at the University of Michigan, wrote a brief essay on the theme of "reimagining communities, technologies and libraries", which evolves from the theme of the 9th NCAAL. Porter's award will be formally announced during BCALA's general membership meeting at the American Library Association annual conference in San Francisco, Calif. on June 28, 2015.

BCALA is a nonprofit organization for different areas of librarianship, including school, public, academic, and special, with national and international membership. It also provides game-changing leadership for the recruitment and development of African-American education and information professionals. It is one of five American Library Association ethnic affiliates and advocates for promoting and improving library services to diverse populations and communities of color. In addition, BCALA has sponsored literary awards for African American authors since 1994 and is also a sponsor of the prestigious Coretta Scott King Book Award.

The text of Porter's award-winning essay is below:

"I see myself as an African American woman not only working for a public library doing what I love, but branching out into the community working for social organizations as well. I will not only connect them to libraries, but will become very much involved with them. I want to reach that administrative status that will not look at the dollar to ignore resources that we should be tapping into them. I want to tap into them and bring the library to a certain place in the community. I want the library to have a voice, be an advocate, build partnerships and be innovative with ideas. This is my goal.

I chose this conference to attend based on community, culture and collaboration. It is very clear that a lot of public library branches are located in the underrepresented communities. I made a promise to myself that given the opportunity to receive my MLIS degree that I would give back. I think it has never been considered that the youth in these communities would also like to have a chance to read and go to college. However, there aren't enough people that truly care and take the time to help. Well, this is why my minor was in African American Studies because I want to not only help my own culture, but others as well. It is time that diversity is brought to the forefront in libraries and this association is about change. I say yes to change and possibilities."

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More information about BCALA is available at www.bcala.org.