

Student Profile

LaBreonna Stori-Turner Bland – Criminology, Law and Society PhD Program



Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

*I read Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* in Fall 2014 and I connected with the text in a visceral way. I am directly impacted by the carceral system and have in some form or fashion, interacted with system for essentially the entirety of my life. I immediately met with my advisor and revealed my desire to address systemic issues embedded within criminology and criminal justice. The following year, I was assembling my application packets to doctoral*

programs, and the University of California, Irvine was my first choice.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

UCI's School of Social Ecology and the Criminology, Law and Society department emphasize interdisciplinary work. I have always appreciated and advocated for multi-dimensional perspectives and solutions to solve social problems. Given that my interests lie broadly in race and inequality within criminology and policies that are informed by the field- it was important to me that UCI's program was less traditional than other criminology programs. When choosing among the graduate programs, UCI was always my first choice honestly. My gut told me that I would thrive in this program. I always listen to my intuition (weird for a researcher, I know).

If you are conducting research, how would you explain your research and its significance to your grandparent?

Wow, that is tough. I would offer the following,

"Currently, I'm wrapping up a project that initially focused on the legitimacy of the civilian-led law enforcement oversight and has since evolved into research that

examines how communities utilize these panels. With an increasing scrutiny placed on reforming policing, it's important to assess how those reforms are carried out as well as the larger implications of those reforms. We should always evaluate solutions to ensure that they are in fact solutions and not causing further harm to people who look and live like we do."

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

Outside of research, I really strive to stay connected to the social justice realm and organizing space. Research can be informed by those experiences of course, and I believe that we do an injustice to research when we stay siloed in our research offices. Knowing what's happening on the ground and how the community is dealing with social issues remains my primary hobby. Outside of social justice work, I strive to stay connected to my family. I travel to Michigan every other month if I can – they keep me grounded in what I came here to do!

Reflections

What advice do you have for a new graduate student in your program?

My advice to a new graduate student in my program would be to exercise self-care from day one. It's ridiculously easy to walk into a graduate program and forget your own humanity. You become obsessed with productivity and publishing. Remember to take time for yourself, unapologetically. The work will always be there, put your peace of mind first.

Don't be afraid of what you don't know. There's a reason why you're here so don't doubt your position. Ask questions and realize that we all have varying experiences and knowledge – your perspective is just as valuable as the rest.

Career

What do you see yourself doing in five or ten years?

In ten years, I see myself conducting evaluation research and starting a local mentorship program that aims to bring more Black females into criminology doctoral programs. Our voices often are lost in the sea of masses and the perspective of a Black woman in researching and evaluating social issues can change the way in which we even approach solutions to system social problems.