

Cornelius Finley

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador
United Kingdom, 2007



“As a Gilman scholar, I was exposed to a new world. This world led to me going to war with poverty.”

Cornelius studied abroad as a Gilman scholar in London, United Kingdom, at the University of Westminster. He credits his experience in the UK for helping him develop “a livelihood dictated by inclusion,” which inspired him to work to create educational opportunities for society’s most vulnerable populations. His experience as a Gilman scholar allowed him to see himself as the face of diversity and inspired him to work for improved educational opportunities for communities in need.

Cornelius is a first-generation high school and college graduate, and the founder of Access Unlimited, a nonprofit that “unapologetically fights against any ‘ism that seeks to exclude our most vulnerable populations.” As someone who grew up experiencing poverty, he is committed to ensuring other families are not stripped of their being due to poverty’s challenges. He is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion and serving his broader community, and he credits Gilman for allowing him to discover his potential.

Via his organization, Cornelius works with 17 schools in partnership with the New York City Department of Education and the Dallas Independent School District and is involved in many educational projects and initiatives, all of which are focused on giving a voice and opportunity to underprivileged and disadvantaged populations. His efforts have allowed him many opportunities to work with high profile organizations to help advance his mission, including the U.S. Department of Education, Forbes, and the New York City Mayor’s Office. He looks forward to continuing his mission as an Alumni Ambassador and enacting change in communities most in need of improved educational opportunities and resources.

- Hometown: Dallas, Texas
- Earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and philosophy from Morehouse College (2009), a Graduate Diploma in Law from the City University of London (2012), and a Master of Laws degree from Middlesex University (2011)
- Participated in Race to the Top, a U.S. Department of Education grant program supporting education reform and innovation at the K-12 level (Summer 2016 - Seattle, Washington)
- Fulbright Specialist - April 2020 - tenured through 2024

