In 500-700 words, please describe what qualifications you have that makes you deserving of this scholarship. Also, please tell us about your current AND future academic, career, and personal goals. Tell us your story!

I want to thank the scholarship reviewers for the opportunity to tell my story in applying for this much needed financial support to stay in school and reach my academic goals. I would use this scholarship so that I might continue my academic study toward a career in community nonviolent action, education and empowerment toward positive social change. The scholarship will also supplement the cost of some of my books and other school costs; as well as financial support toward living expenses at the veteran transitional housing program. Winning the scholarship would allow me greater freedom to seek internships pacific to my major area of study while at the same time take more of a leadership role in BCC’s student clubs, specifically the Global Studies Club, BCC Veterans Club, Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society, Debate Club and the Black Student Union. Participation in these clubs will strengthen critical leadership skills in problem solving, project planning, team building and effective communication and conflict resolution skills. I am looking forward to participating in new undertakings that will allow me to be of greater service to my school and community.

My current goal is to complete my Associate of Arts Degree in Global Studies at Berkeley City College, to add to my certificates of completion with high honors in Labor Studies and Peace Studies from San Diego City College. I hope to continue my academic studies at UC Berkeley. With a step in that direction I was selected among many applicants for the Summer Enrichment 2014 Transfer Alliance Program (TAP) my first class at UC Berkeley (Chicano Studies 159, Immigration, migration and labor) where I received a letter grade of A,

Likewise for the fall 2014 semester with only math to complete towards my AA, I have been accepted in the BCC/UC Berkeley concurrent program “Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies. I’m looking forward to a second semester at UC Berkeley to prove myself for the next level of academic study in my chosen major of interest, peace and conflict studies, with a minor in global poverty.

I hope to transfer this education and experience into a related work that empowers others to see possibilities where they might only have seen obstacles.

After completion of my BA degree in peace and conflict studies, I would then like to apply to a master’s program in Peace and Justice Studies at the United Nations program in Costa Rica, with a focus on Latin America and the US with a career involving governmental, nonprofit, or global organization that work to promote negotiation, peacemaking, peace building, restorative justice mediation, and/or reconciliation in creating a more peaceful world, in addressing issues in labor, human rights, security, and/or global poverty.

I joined the military at an early age and struggled greatly with the choices I made. There are no easy decisions in war, and the ones I was forced to make under the pressure of knowing my reaction could mean the difference of a comrade’s life continue to haunt me. The struggle I faced within myself after leaving the service nearly cost me my life. I spent time in jail and in and out the Veteran’s Hospital seeking relief from post-traumatic stress disorder and was labeled as being Catastrophically Disabled. After spending years of living on the streets, I found the turnaround I needed to rebuild a life for myself. The first place I turned was to school. At first there little support from doctors, who thought that the challenge of school would be detrimental to my health. I felt then and believe even more now, that I had earned something better for myself. I knew I needed a strong education, so I enrolled in San Diego City College (SDCC)

I was committed, I faced many challenges, such as taking remedial pre-college level courses but working hard I consistently made the dean’s list and became an honors student. I embraced outside help from the disability center and the EOPS program. I spent extra hours with professors and formed study groups with peers. I formed the first veteran club and veteran center on SDCC campus in order to create a safe harbor for veterans while building community; together we developed a mentor, and outreach program that supported student veteran retention. Working with faculty and students, I also organized our college’s first “Rite of Passage Ceremony” for African American graduates, which served as a celebration of our unique struggles, at the same time serving as an example to younger persons of color and others that higher education could be an option for success for them too. My journey has seen difficulties, but it has given me the strength to see what matters. I believe it is my calling in empowering others in creating positive social change, using my personal struggles as a vehicle to work toward restorative justice, personal reconciliation, and negotiation to bring those same skills to bear on issues of universal conflict and poverty with nonviolent solutions.

Maurice Martin