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4-2022

RWU Law News: The Newsletter of Roger Williams University School of Law

Michael M. Bowden

Gregory W. Bowman

Brooklyn Crockton

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RWU Law News

The Newsletter of
Roger Williams University School of Law



April 2022

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Community Connections



A Major Gift & Matching Challenge to Launch Diversity, Public Interest Scholarship

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[Get details](#)

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[Learn more](#)



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[Read more](#)



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Dawn Euer '10 & Katherine Kazarian 1L

State Senator Dawn Euer '10 and 1L House Majority Whip Katherine Kazarian are leading the charge for the Let RI Vote Act, which would make permanent the changes Rhode Island put in place during the pandemic.

[Their Story](#)



In the Providence Journal, Dean Gregory Bowman argues that Western sanctions on Russia are imperfect but necessary.

[Read the OpEd ...](#)



With drawings and essays, Rhode Island K-12 students answer the question, "How has Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg inspired me?"

[Learn more ...](#)



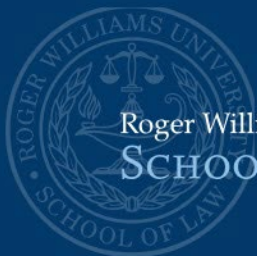
In a Sacramento Observer piece, 3L Brooklyn Crockton explains why "anti-Blackness doesn't define" Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

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SCHOOL OF LAW

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Welcome, Professor Bernard Freamon

A leading scholar, teacher and clinician from Seton Hall joins RWU Law, taking the reins of its new required course on race and the law: 'We're not just teaching about law, we're teaching about justice.'

April 20, 2022

Michael M. Bowden



Professor Bernard K. Freamon

Roger Williams University School of Law is proud to welcome a new member to its outstanding faculty: Professor Bernard K. Freamon is already hard at work refining and refocusing the law school's new required course, "Race and the Foundations of American Law," and attending

planning meetings for the course. He will also teach a number of other courses, including Evidence and a seminar on slavery and human trafficking.

“I teach about slavery; that’s my scholarship,” he said. “So I have been deeply engaged in theoretical thinking on the legacy of slavery and race in America. I created the Center for Social Justice at Seton Hall with the same goal of getting these ideas into the curriculum—so that we’re not just teaching about *law*, we’re teaching about *justice*.”

Professor Freamon brings a unique and impressive set of qualifications to the job. A Professor of Law Emeritus at Seton Hall Law School, he has visited on the law faculties of the University of Nairobi, Washington and Lee University, Rutgers University (Newark), and Pace University’s School of Law; and he has served as an adjunct faculty member at New York University School of Law for the past four years, teaching Islamic Jurisprudence. He also recently taught an innovative course on slavery and human trafficking, based in Zanzibar, Tanzania, and sponsored by the Global Education Program at George Mason University.

I envision creating a law school curriculum that is more justice-oriented, and more sensitive to the problem of race in American law—because race is, in fact, central to how American law functions.

~ Professor Bernard K. Freamon

Over the course of his career, Professor Freamon has worked as a project director for the American Civil Liberties Union, focusing on civil rights and civil liberties. He also has extensive experience in clinical legal education. As founding director of Seton Hall’s Center for Social Justice, he participated in extensive litigation in the federal courts, including the Supreme Court of the United States, pertaining to the First, Fifth, Sixth, Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. In addition, he has worked on a variety of issues in the state courts related to the wellbeing of the poor, the underrepresented, religious minorities, lawyers, prisoners and criminal defendants.

In recent years, much of Professor Freamon’s research and writing has focused on Islamic law and jurisprudence. He recently published the first comprehensive legal history of slavery and abolition in the Muslim world and he is currently at work on a textbook for law students on slavery and human trafficking. It was his work in this area of law in particular that drew him to RWU Law.

“When I heard that Roger Williams had an opening for someone to direct this program, I thought, “Well, this is actually what *I’m* trying to do, too, in my teaching and in my scholarship.” It was a confirmation of what I was already thinking and doing. It was just a natural fit.”

Professor Freamon envisions the “Race and the Foundations of American Law” course as a potential springboard for the establishment of a center that serves both the School of Law and the wider University.

“I see it serving as the hub for what could become a Center on Race and the Foundations of American Law,” Professor Freamon said. “I envision a *place*; a think tank of sorts, where we

could strive for a critical mass on the problem of integrating race into the American legal curriculum. It would be a resource for other law professors and law schools, in terms of creating a law school curriculum that is more justice-oriented, and more sensitive to the problem of race in American law—because race is, in fact, central to how American law functions. It would be a place that people could visit from other law schools and universities.”

It’s a development whose time has now fully arrived in the public consciousness, Professor Freamon added—akin to the growing awareness and acknowledgement of the ways in which the U.S. legal system has traditionally been stacked against victims of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. In his view, these issues are analogous to the problem of race in American law.

“This consciousness is driven, for example, by the things that happened to George Floyd and others; things that are happening in our society right now,” he said. “Students are demanding that these issues be addressed—similar to student demands for relevancy in the classroom back in the 1960s. They want to be equipped with the tools they need to build not just a *race-neutral* practice, but an *anti-racist* practice.”

Professor Freamon expects that these demands will only grow with time, and that a Center on Race and the Foundations of American Law could help legal education rise to the challenge.

“In five or 10 years, I think a course like this will be a mandatory course in a lot of law schools,” he said, while observing that every student will initially approach this material through their own unique lenses. In fact, bringing together students with different views on race and the law is part of the purpose and importance of the course.

“Dialogue about race is difficult, but it is so important,” Professor Freamon said. “There are still a lot of issues we must confront, and RWU Law is well ahead of the curve in teaching our future lawyers how to confront them.”

RWU Law Receives Major Gift & Matching Challenge to Launch Scholarship Supporting Diverse Students, Public Interest Careers

R.I. Attorney Mark Mandell challenges the legal community to raise \$750,000 in support of diverse and public interest scholars at state’s only law school. The goal is nearly halfway met.

February 22, 2022

Michael M. Bowden



Zachary Mandell '11, Yvette M. Boisclair, and Mark S. Mandell

Prominent Rhode Island trial lawyer Mark S. Mandell has made a major matching gift to Roger Williams University School of Law, with the goal of providing \$750,000 in scholarships to help diversify the legal profession and increase access to justice in the Ocean State and beyond.

The Mandell-Boisclair Justice Scholarship Fund will provide endowed scholarships to RWU Law for diverse law students, and those intending to practice public interest law. Mandell has donated an initial \$250,000 to the Fund, and pledged up to an additional \$250,000 to match other individual donations made to the Fund over the next five years. With the goal of raising \$750,000 in total, the Fund could annually support \$5,000 scholarships for eight students, totaling \$15,000 each over their three years in law school.

“The Mandell-Boisclair Justice Scholarship Fund is a reflection of our family’s commitment to social, economic and legal justice,” said Mandell, senior partner in the Providence firm of Mandell, Boisclair, & Mandell, Ltd. “We recognize that we have been blessed in our lives in so many important ways. We believe that with those blessings comes the responsibility to help others achieve their potential. We recognize the importance of giving back.”

The Mandell-Boisclair Justice Scholarship Fund is part of a continuum of financial support from the Mandell family that has helped further the School of Law’s mission of changing the legal profession by encouraging both diverse and underrepresented students, as well as careers in public interest law. Several years ago, the family provided key funding for the School of Law’s highly successful Pro Bono Collaborative program, through which RWU Law students and faculty members partner with law firms and community service organizations to provide essential legal assistance to communities and individuals in need throughout Rhode Island and its surrounding regions.

“People often complain that there are too many lawyers—but that is not really accurate,” said RWU Law Dean Gregory W. Bowman. “Instead, the problem is twofold. First, the legal

profession needs to reflect the diverse society we serve. Second, we need more lawyers working in the public interest field. The Mandell family's generous gift is a really meaningful step forward in addressing both of these issues. The School of Law is profoundly grateful for their generosity."

Widely recognized for his pivotal leadership role in such meaningful and high-profile litigation as the Station Nightclub Fire case, and for his success in the many important civil trials he has won in his 47 years as a trial lawyer, Mandell is also a distinguished and longtime member of the RWU and RWU Law communities. He has served on the University's Board of Trustees and the School of Law's Board of Directors, including as chair—preceding the Board's current chair, the Honorable William E. Smith. Mandell and his wife and law partner, Yvette M. Boisclair, are also the proud parents of RWU Law alumnus Zachary Mandell '11, who currently serves on the law school's Board of Directors and on its Champions for Justice Host Committee.

"The Mandells' gift is special and powerful. In both size and scope, it redefines the idea of giving to the University," said RWU Board of Trustees Chair Tim Baxter '83, former President and CEO of Samsung Electronics and the first RWU graduate to lead the Board. "By engaging the entire community in common purpose, it increases the impact of our individual gifts. It widens the impact of the School of Law, and ultimately it helps to ensure the legal profession reflects the society we serve and focuses on critically important public interest work."

Over the past decade, RWU Law has seen its percentage of students identifying as racially diverse nearly double, from 14 percent in 2011 to 27 percent today. The Mandell gift will help the law school maintain and increase such improvements.

"I am beyond thrilled to see my alma mater taking a national lead in launching bold and essential initiatives that seek to both diversify our legal community and improve access to justice for all of Rhode Island's court users," said the Honorable Melissa R. DuBose '04, associate justice of the Rhode Island District Court and current member of RWU Law's Board of Directors. Judge DuBose chairs the Board's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and also serves on the law school's Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee.

The Mandells' gift also aligns with other current School of Law initiatives aimed at enhancing diversity in legal education to achieve greater inclusiveness in the legal profession. RWU Law's groundbreaking "Race and the Foundations of American Law" course is one of the first mandatory classes at any U.S. law school to offer important and often overlooked perspectives on race and the law, and their impact on modern legal practice.

Last year, RWU Law began cosponsoring an innovative "Integrating Doctrine & Diversity Speaker Series," together with the City University of New York School of Law and JURIST, a legal news and commentary service. Each installment of the speaker series has drawn hundreds of legal education professionals from across the country. Based on a 2021 textbook coedited by RWU Law and CUNY instructors, the series focuses on practical strategies for putting diversity and inclusion goals into action in the law school classroom.

“I join the Rhode Island legal community in thanking the Mandell family for their breathtakingly generous gift to RWU Law, their commitment to public interest law, and their support of historically underrepresented students,” Judge DuBose added. “This is truly amazing!”

Initial individual matching contributions to the Fund have already increased the scholarship’s value to \$320,000. The University is planning a major campaign to ensure that the gift reaches its maximum potential.

RWU Law Home to 'Stellar Faculty': Princeton Review

Influential blog uses data from 2022 edition of Princeton Review’s Best Law Schools to rank RWU Law among the nation's best for quality of teaching and faculty accessibility.

February 2, 2022

Michael M. Bowden



RWU Law is home to some of the nation’s best law professors according to data from the 2022 edition of *Princeton Review’s Best Law Schools*.

“Rhode Island may only have one law school in the state,” the influential guide states, “but the stellar faculty and strong academics of the student body make Roger Williams an impressive law school to attend.”

RWU Law's professors scored particularly well, according to Paul Caron, dean at Pepperdine's Caruso School of Law, who publishes the popular [TaxProf Blog](#). Caron used *Princeton Review's* data to calculate law school top 50 ranks in a number of categories, including student perceptions of the quality and accessibility of their law school faculties.

On "accessibility", [Roger Williams ranked 6th](#) in the country, behind only Virginia, Pepperdine, St. Thomas, Texas Tech and Washington & Lee. The "quality of teaching" ranking found [RWU Law placing at 12th](#) behind Virginia, Chicago, Duke, Stanford, Vanderbilt, Boston College, Florida State, Georgia, Notre Dame, UC Irvine, and Washington & Lee.

Caron combined the data from both lists and [ranked RWU Law 11th](#) in the United States for students' overall satisfaction with their faculty. Anecdotally, *Princeton Review* found "Roger Williams' students brag that the faculty helps students 'succeed in a personalized manner. They take the time to get to know you and truly understand your idea of law.'"

"I was proud to see how highly our students rate their professors," said RWU Law Dean Gregory W. Bowman. "Anyone familiar with our faculty's superb academic work, and its profound dedication to preparing the next generation of attorneys, judges and leaders, will heartily agree with this outstanding and well-deserved assessment."

RWU Law Recognized by White House

Roger Williams among law schools thanked by U.S. Attorney General Garland for work addressing housing and eviction crisis, increasing housing stability, and improving access to justice.

January 28, 2022

Michael M. Bowden



RWU Law was among the law schools thanked by U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland on Jan 28, 2022, for their work addressing the housing and eviction crisis, increasing housing stability, and improving access to justice.

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Roger Williams University School of Law was recognized today by the White House at an event thanking law schools that had “responded to the U.S. Attorney General’s call to address the housing and eviction crisis, and help increase housing stability and access to justice in their communities.”

Last August 30, United States Attorney General Merrick Garland [called on law schools and law firms to help fight evictions](#), following [a U.S. Supreme Court decision](#) that removed protections created by the federal government in response to the pandemic. Ninety-nine law schools across the country responded.

Garland personally thanked them at the online event.

“You assisted your clients and your communities at a time when they needed it the most, when our country needed it the most,” he said. “As law students, as leaders of some of our nation’s law schools, and as lawyers, you are uniquely positioned to help fill the gaps in our legal system.”

“We are proud to use RWU Law’s Pro Bono Collaborative as a vehicle to respond to Attorney General Garland’s call for law schools to step up and assist with the current eviction crisis.”

~ Suzanne Harrington-Steppen

In his closing remarks, Garland directly addressed law students in the audience.

“In the words of [President John F.] Kennedy, you are the new generation of Americans to whom the torch of legal obligation is being passed,” he said. “Your service over these past 151 days assures me that the torch remains in good hands. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Associate Attorney General of the U.S. Vanita Gupta also spoke, noting that state court programs to help tenants threatened with eviction “cannot do it alone.”

“They need all of you – law students willing to step up and make a difference – to make these programs work,” Gupta said. “We know we have an incredible network of legal services organizations around the country that have stepped up to meet this moment, and we are so grateful. But we also knew that we needed to activate the law school communities around the country to meet the challenge as well.”

Other speakers at the event included Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff; Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo; and Gene Sperling, Senior Advisor to the President, and Coordinator of the American Rescue Plan.

‘Hard, Sad, Relentless’ Work

News of the honor was met with enthusiasm at RWU Law.

“I am so proud of my colleagues and our students – our future colleagues – at RWU Law, for their extraordinary response to Attorney General Garland’s call last summer,” [Dean Gregory Bowman](#) said. “At RWU Law, providing public service and representing the unrepresented is part of our institutional DNA; it’s something we do every day. It was so impressive and gratifying to see our Feinstein Center for Experiential Education and the [Pro Bono Collaborative](#) rise to the challenge of the eviction crisis.”

[Laurie Barron](#), Director of RWU Law’s [Feinstein Center for Pro Bono & Experiential Education](#), thanked her colleagues [Eliza Vorenberg](#), Director of Pro Bono & Community Partnerships, and [Suzanne Harrington-Steppen](#), Associate Director of Pro Bono Programs, for their efforts in designing and leading the school’s response in partnership with [Rhode Island Legal Services](#) (RILS) and the [Rhode Island Center for Justice](#) (RICJ).

“Liza and Suzy created this project in the fall, without any reduction in any other work, to make this happen in Rhode Island,” Barron said.

“Since late September, with the help of 14 RWU Law students, we’ve been able to assist over 200 tenants facing eviction, many of them at risk of homelessness,” Vorenberg said. “We couldn’t be prouder of our law students who stepped up to help.”

Harrington-Steppen agreed, adding that the work is ongoing.

“Each day dozens of Rhode Islanders end up in local courthouses, confronted with losing their homes. They’re nearly all without legal representation,” she said. “We are honored to have them working hand in hand with RILS and the RICJ to provide these unrepresented tenants advice and counsel.”

That work, Barron explained, is “hard, sad, and relentless,” involving “countless hours and days in the hallways of District Court, in both Providence and Kent County – masked in the midst of a raging pandemic – working with a team of dedicated law students to help unrepresented tenants at risk of eviction.”

Their successful efforts were facilitated by RWU Law’s strong and well-established public service infrastructure, said Assistant Dean of Students [Lorraine Lalli](#).

“RWU Law took such a leadership role during the pandemic to help communities in need,” Lalli said. “Housing was already a priority for our pro bono projects, but this work was accelerated and increased in really important ways. Being well-positioned to address the most urgent needs of society requires a long term commitment and requires organizations to be well positioned to identify and shift resources to respond. The work of the Feinstein Center and the Pro Bono Collaborative has been tremendous, and has impacted the lives of Rhode Islanders in so many significant ways.”

Said Harrington-Steppen, “We are proud to use RWU Law’s Pro Bono Collaborative as a vehicle to respond to Attorney General Garland’s call for law schools to step up and assist with the current eviction crisis.”

Two RWU Law Lawmakers Fight to 'Let R.I. Vote'

State Senator Dawn Euer L'10 and 1L House Majority Whip Katherine Kazarian are leading the charge for the Let RI Vote Act, which would make permanent the changes Rhode Island put in place during the pandemic.

March 24, 2022

Michael M. Bowden



Let RI Vote Act co-sponsors: Senator Dawn Euer L'10 (D-RI District 13), left, and R.I. House Majority Whip Katherine Kazarian, a current RWU Law 1L.

While Congress struggles to pass federal voter rights legislation, a pair of RWU Law-affiliated lawmakers – Senator Dawn Euer L'10 (D-RI District 13, Newport), and current 1L, House Majority Whip Katherine Kazarian (D-RI District 63) – are focusing on the Ocean State as lead co-sponsors of the Let RI Vote Act, which aims to make permanent the changes Rhode Island put in place during the pandemic to make voting safer and easier.

“In the 2020 election cycle, we saw how the changes that we made for the pandemic really helped people get out to vote,” Kazarian said. “The Board of Elections liked them, our constituents liked them – we had a record number of people vote in the 2020 election. And so many people told me that they loved the new processes. It made it easier for them to plan to vote, rather than just hoping that their schedules worked out on Election Day.”

Kazarian added that the bill would also help avoid voter confusion. “People voted in a certain way in 2020,” she said. “I would hate to have people go to vote in 2022 and have all the rules changed on them. We want to be consistent. Because at the end of the day, it’s all about getting people engaged, getting them registered and getting them to participate in democracy.”

The Let RI Vote Act would, among other things, expand the right to vote early, either in-person or by mail; allow voters to apply for a mail-in ballot online; require every community to have at least one ballot drop box; and set up a multilingual hotline to inform voters about the process. It would also eliminate the requirement that voters secure the signatures of two witnesses or a notary public to use a mail ballot. Instead voter identity would be confirmed by a signature verification process.

Such rules, Euer pointed out, have made Rhode Island an outlier.

“We’re the only state, besides Alabama I think, that has that requirement,” she said. “I don’t know the history of how [such rules] came to exist in Rhode Island, but they’ve ended up just being ‘security theater’ and a barrier for folks. It’s critically important for any state government to modernize and update its processes to reflect changing times.”

Kazarian agreed. “In some ways Rhode Island is in the minority” regarding voting rules,” she said. “Passing Let Rhode Island Vote would align it more with the majority.”

Currently in committee, the bill has a good chance of passing in time for the Fall 2020 elections, according to both lawmakers.

“Katie and I have spent a lot of time having conversations and trying to get everybody on the same page. I’m feeling very positive about it,” Euer said. “I’ve worked on these issues for a long time and it was actually an area of my practice. Prior to being elected, I represented clients before the Board of Elections and litigated election matters in Superior Courts. From my perspective, anything we can do to improve access for folks is really something we should be doing.”

Kazarian is also cautiously optimistic.

“I don’t think it’s ever easy to pass legislation, no matter what you’re trying to do,” she said. “This is a very nuanced, complicated topic, and we’re trying to make sure that everybody’s questions and concerns are answered. By the time we are able to get this bill to the floor, members of the General Assembly will hopefully feel good about what they’re voting on and know how it will help their constituents. There’s always a lot of work to do, but I will say I could have no greater partner than Senator Dawn Euer.”

Sanctions on Russia: Imperfect But Necessary

March 2, 2022

Gregory W. Bowman



The following Op-Ed was published in the print edition of the Providence Journal, Monday, Feb. 28, 2022, p. 11A



All too often, history repeats itself. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a perfect example. President Vladimir Putin clearly wants to create a buffer zone of security between Russia and Europe, not unlike during the Cold War, and he is willing to create an international crisis to get it. The

West's information counter-offensive has called out Russia's behavior and false statements but ultimately has not averted the crisis.

Sending NATO or U.S. troops to Ukraine is currently out of the question: Ukraine is not a NATO member, and sending direct military assistance risks all-out war beyond the borders of Ukraine. As a result, international trade sanctions are the response of choice.

I have worked in international trade and national security law for nearly three decades, as both a practicing lawyer and law professor, and I have studied many trade sanctions programs. So I can say with authority that trade sanctions are not as effective as we would wish. While they often have laudable goals, they usually achieve questionable results and have undesirable consequences. Yet they may be the only tool immediately available in this crisis.

The dubious track record of trade sanctions raises an important question: why are they used? One reason is that they are easy to implement. They are politically expedient and highly visible, and they impose few immediate costs on the implementing country. In the U.S., trade sanctions are usually issued via presidential executive orders—literally with the stroke of a pen.

That is what happened here. President Biden signed an executive order prohibiting U.S. persons and companies from engaging in new investment, trade, or financing with the regions of Ukraine that Russia claims are independent. President Biden also has imposed sanctions against Russian financial institutions, as well as against certain Russian elites. Persons and entities named in these executive orders have had their U.S. financial assets frozen, and U.S. persons and companies are prohibited from doing business with them. The U.S. and its NATO allies are implementing multilateral sanctions as well.

In a sense, this response sounds sweeping and decisive. But how effective will it be? So far, not very. And where might Russia turn for assistance? The answer is many places, and most notably China. Moreover, multilateral sanctions are often imperfect, because broad coalitions are difficult to maintain.

We live in an interconnected global economy, and it is hard to block all trade and investment with another country. It might have been more possible at the height of the Cold War, when the U.S. could simply turn off the spigot of international trade and investment. But now there are multiple spigots, many of which the U.S. does not control. U.S. trade sanctions will impede Russia but not stop it. Plus, Russia has built up significant financial reserves, presumably in anticipation of a move like this, and this mutes the immediate impact of sanctions.

Another problem with trade sanctions—especially prolonged sanctions—is that they exact huge collateral tolls on innocent people. I have seen this happen over and over again, and there is only so much that humanitarian relief (such as blocking investment but letting medical supplies through) can do to reduce this harm.

I am not saying that sanctions are not appropriate here; they are. They are better right now than direct military response. They are better than doing nothing. They send clear signals of disapproval. And there is no other viable option for swift response. Perhaps a sustained show of

resolve and opposition by the West, combined with military opposition by Ukraine, will hinder Russia's aggression somewhat. Or perhaps not. Either way, trade sanctions, despite their limits, are the best hand for the U.S. and its allies to play right now.

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*RWU Law Dean Gregory W. Bowman spent nearly ten years practicing international trade law with two large law firms having strong international practice groups. He was involved in significant work with trade sanctions and export controls against various (a) countries (Cuba, North Korea, Myanmar, Iran, and Iraq, to name a few); (b) groups (terrorist organizations, narcotics cartels, money laundering organizations, and more); and (c) individuals (members of those organizations and representatives and nationals of sanctioned countries).*

*"It was fascinating and exciting work—complex, technical, policy-oriented, and nuanced," Bowman notes. "And during my time in practice I saw a lot of trade sanction programs that, despite laudable goals, had questionable results and undesirable consequences."*

To access the digital flipbook edition of the Providence Journal, use [RWU Law library access](#) or [direct access](#).

# Meet the RBG Essay Contest Winners!

With drawings and essays, young Rhode Islanders answer the question, “How has Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg inspired me?”

March 22, 2022

Michael M. Bowden



Roger Williams University School of Law is proud to announce the winning entries in its Second Annual Ruth Bader Ginsburg Essay Contest.

In December, RWU Law invited Ocean State students from grades K through 12 to submit essays and artworks on how they have been inspired by the legacy of late Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, who passed away on September 18, 2020.

As part of the prize, *Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly* generously agreed to publish the winning entries. The winning students also received cash prizes and books.

“Justice Ginsburg cared about equality for all people,” said RWU Law Professor Emily Sack, who advises the Women’s Law Society, which co-sponsored the contest with its members serving as judges. “When she started her fight for women’s equality under the law, it seemed like an impossible task, but she worked hard and persisted, and made great strides for the things she believed in.

“She also knew that this is not something she could accomplish alone, and that we all have a part to play in making a better world,” Sack added. “She famously said, ‘Fight for things you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.’” This essay contest is a wonderful way

for all of us, and especially our state’s students, to be inspired by Justice Ginsburg’s life and her call to action.”

This year’s response was once again gratifyingly large and enthusiastic, and the judges found themselves making some very hard choices. But the winners have been selected and (drum roll) they are:

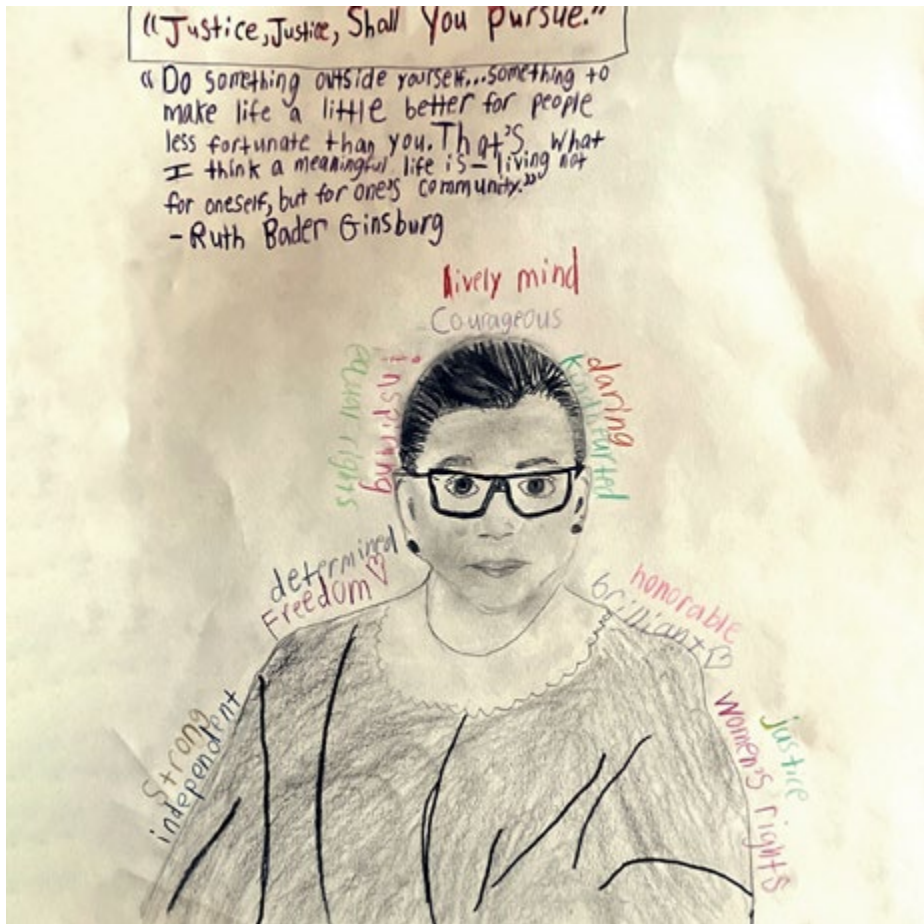


Elementary School Winner

**“Justice, Justice, Shall You Pursue”**

By Aviva Nierman

*North Smithfield Elementary School (Grade 3)*



"Justice, Justice, Shall You Pursue"



Middle School Winner

### **“How Has Ruth Bader Ginsburg Inspired Me?”**

By Carter Mi

*TIMES<sup>2</sup> Academy, Providence (Grade 6)*

Ruth Bader Ginsburg has inspired the world in many different ways, especially for women. But here is how she has personally inspired me. The first way is that she was one of only nine women in her class of 500 hundred at Harvard Law School. She even graduated at the top of her class! How this inspires me is that when I grow older I want to become a lawyer. At the time being a lawyer was a rare job for women since they were thought to be less intelligent or less capable than men. This fact makes it more inspiring because she defied the expectations of society at that time.

In addition to that statement, another way she has inspired me is that she did many things for women’s rights. How this inspires me is that women at the time were oppressed. Even though I am not a woman, I feel inspired by this because I am an Asian-American and quite a few Asian hate crimes occur throughout America due to the spread of COVID-19. People of my culture are currently being oppressed, kind of like how women were at the time, so seeing someone stand up for their people in order to prove what they think is right truly inspires me.

Lastly, the final way she has inspired me is that she kept working at the Supreme Court even though she was sick with colon cancer. How this inspires me is that throughout my life I’ve experienced a few deaths and have seen loved ones struggle to stay alive while they were sick. Now, to see someone who has the strength and willpower to work even though they’re sick with a disease like cancer is truly inspirational.

In conclusion, Ruth Bader Ginsburg is an inspirational figure, not just for women, but the entire world as a whole. Even though she’s gone now, she will not be forgotten for the ways she has inspired the world.



High School Winner

## **“Cultivating Change”**

By Isabella Montini

*North Kingstown High School (Grade 12)*

Ruth Bader Ginsburg not only paved the way for feminists, but she demonstrated what true leadership looks like. Throughout her career she worked with others and led a nation to fight for what they believed in and to encourage others to join them, no matter their beliefs.

She practiced what she preached through the friendship she found with Justice Scalia. Although the two Justices had differing ideologies, they battled in good faith and had a lasting friendship. Her actions and words have inspired me because not only did she fight for justice, but she fought for civility among differing opinions.

This is a key value that I impose as I lead a non-partisan political action committee called Students4Change. Giving students and young members of society a voice in local democracy is a powerful skill to cultivate meaningful change. Ruth Bader Ginsburg inspired me to lead this platform to give everyone a collective voice, no matter their viewpoint.

Our country is lacking good-faith actors on the local, state, and national level. Citizens can become cruel and vile when fighting for what they stand for, as demonstrated during the insurrection. RBG never gave in to foul play or bad actors. She chose to lead in a way in which others will follow. Her passion and leadership inspired me to fight for what I believe in during local municipal meetings, as well as encouraging others to do so despite controversy in opinions.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was also an avid fighter for voting rights and wanted to grant equitable access for Americans to exercise this right. In the case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, RBG specified that she believed any states with a history of racial discrimination in voting under The Voting Rights Act of 1965 should be required to get federal approval before changing their voting laws.



Because of the history across the country of gerrymandering, limiting ballot drop boxes, and stigmas around mail-in ballots, RBG's fight for equitable voting rights inspired me to join the Let Rhode Island Vote campaign and work with elected officials to ensure voting rights in Rhode Island. These provisions include no excuse mail voting, a permanent absentee list, rigorous voter registration list maintenance, early voting, enhanced signature verification, online mail ballot request, ballot drop boxes, no witness requirement, and new primary dates.

I door-knocked in Providence to inform citizens on this new act, and encourage them to send Let Rhode Island Vote postcards to their state senators and representatives. My political action committee also met with Alana DiMario, one of the lead state senators sponsoring the legislation, to discuss how efforts can be increased to ensure its passing. As RBG put it, "throwing out preclearance, when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes, is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet."

As a feminist, Ruth Bader Ginsburg continuously stood up for women's rights and equal representation. She gave us a seat at the table and showed so many that the voices of women need to be heard and respected. Her perseverance has inspired me to fight for equitable access to abortion in Rhode Island. Under the current system, not all healthcare covers this cost. This disproportionately affects women of color and women with lower incomes. We all deserve equitable access to these programs.

Throughout her career, Ruth Bader Ginsburg has worked to protect the rights of so many Americans. Her actions and words of wisdom inspired me to fight for what I believe in in my own town and state. She leaves behind a great legacy of leading in a way where others will follow, and she proved that what makes a great leader is inspiring others to also fight for change as she laid the groundwork for so many after her.

## **'Why I Know Anti-Blackness Doesn't Define Ketanji Brown Jackson'**

Brown Jackson could become the first Black woman U.S. Supreme Court justice. But as law student Brooklyn Crockton discovered, being mistaken for a defendant while entering a courtroom is all too common for Black lawyers.

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Brooklyn Crockton,  
RWU Law 3L



RWU Law 3L Brooklyn Crockton; U.S. Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson.

*RWU Law 3L Brooklyn Crockton contributed this OpEd to the [WordInBlack](#) column of the [Sacramento Observer](#), March 22, 2022 edition. It is reproduced here with the permission of the author.*

**(WIB)** – We’re surrounded by the manifestations of the greatness of Black women: We can turn on the television and see Issa Rae writing awkward Black girls into history. We can see Vice President Kamala Harris addressing the nation. And soon, we might be able to crack open a textbook and read an opinion by none other than United States Supreme Court Justice [Ketanji Brown Jackson](#).

As a third-year law student at Roger Williams University School of Law in Rhode Island, I, like so many Black people, felt a rush of emotion over [Brown Jackson’s historic nomination](#). Indeed, the confirmation of the future Justice Jackson would offer us a symbolic double hand-tap on the seat next to her for younger generations of Black girls.

Brown Jackson’s accomplishments are also a powerful reminder that the anti-Blackness that Black attorneys experience is not what defines us.

In early March as I waited — dressed professionally and carrying case-related folders and binders — to enter a Rhode Island courtroom, a deputy sheriff put his body between me and the door and told me to step to the side.

I was there as part of my law school’s experiential Criminal Defense Clinic — I’m conditionally barred to appear in court through the program. However, the sheriff’s deputy questioned me within earshot of other people about my name not being on the docket. To my shock, he asked me, “Are you the defendant?”

[I shared this humiliating experience on Tik-Tok](#) and [my video about it went viral](#). As I asked in the video, why would he assume that I was a defendant?

*I think we all know why.*

After my video went viral I heard from so many lawyers who have had this kind of racist experience. Imagine how many times Judge Jackson has had something similar happen to her?

In 2021, only 4.7% of lawyers in the United States were Black, according to the American Bar Association's [Profile of the Legal Profession](#). Once the shimmer of law school wears off after graduation, the disregard for Black and Brown lives become obvious to Black lawyers. For centuries, the law has been used as a mechanism for the degradation of people of color. Joining the legal profession means actively challenging statutes made to oppress people that look like me — like Judge Jackson — and doing so is no easy feat.

Black people who enter the legal profession are expected to form a vibranium skin against racial microaggressions. People — like that deputy sheriff — question our credentials. We are undermined, overworked, underpaid, over-analyzed, and under-represented, but we are always overprepared. And a system made to oppress us is no match for the strength of our ancestors — for the strength they give us right here, right now.

As Judge Jackson's confirmation hearings begin, I'm reminded of my Alabama-born-and-raised great-grandmother. She gave me a gift — the gift of sight. Not sight in a literal sense, but the ability to see past myself when the weight of life and the law seems too heavy to bear.

On the first day of law school, as I stood in the mirror eagerly preparing for the day, for a short second, I saw myself through her eyes — the same eyes that saw *her* enslaved grandmother carry the weight of a nation on her shoulders. The same eyes that saw Emmitt Till's death reported on the front page of the newspaper — a paper she held onto for the rest of her life. The same eyes that saw a fiery cross burning on a neighbor's lawn who had bravely exercised the right to vote.

My great-grandmother saw many things in her life, but justice for Black women was not one of them. She exchanged her aspirations for the reality of being treated as a second-class citizen. However, her hopes manifested in me the desire to create space for Black women so future generations could dream limitlessly. I saw her dreams come true in the mirror.

Judge Jackson's presence on the Supreme Court will be more than just *another* Black woman doing *another* incredible thing. Her presence will be the guttural croaking of a voice never before heard on the Bench. Her voice will be the song of justice resounding nationwide.

I am grateful to witness Black women everywhere continue to shatter barriers — yes, please. I'm the first in my family to go to college and I'll be the first to graduate from law school. Although I'm not sure where the law will take me, I know this for sure: If it leads me to the Supreme Court, I'll know that place was made by Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.