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Law School News: 2024 RBG Essay & Art Contest Winners Recognized At Women In Law Leadership Lecture 4-16-24

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Law School News: 2024 RBG Essay & Art Contest Winners Recognized at Women in Law Leadership Lecture

The essay and artwork contest winners hail from Woodbridge Elementary School, Segue Institute for Learning, and Mount Saint Charles Academy.

April 16, 2024



2024 RWU Law RBG Winners announced at the RWU Women in Law Leadership Lecture on April 4. (L to R) Visaagan Vipakaran, Woodridge Elementary School, Grade 5; Avery Blais, Mount Saint Charles Academy, Grade 9; Rosie Hidalgo, Director, Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), U.S. Department of Justice; Emily Sack, RWU Law Professor; Reese Lourenco, Segue Institute for Learning, Grade 6; RWU Law Women's Law Society President Andrea Staehelin L'24; and Gregory W. Bowman, RWU Law Dean.

One of the highlights of the recent Women in Law Leadership Lecture, featuring guest Director Rosie Hidalgo of the US Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) and RWU Law's Prof. Emily J. Sack, was the presentation of the 2024 Ruth Bader Ginsburg Essay/Art Contest.

Elementary School Winner (Grades K-5)

Visaagan Vipakaran's artwork entitled "Equality for All People" won the prize for art. Visaagan is a Grade 5 student at Woodridge Elementary School.

Middle School Winner (Grades 6-8)

Reese Lourenco's essay, "The Great Influence of Ruth Bader Ginsburg," earned the Middle School prize. Reese is a Grade 6 student at Segue Institute for Learning. According to Reese, the late RBG inspired with her bravery and perseverance.

High School Winner (Grades 9-12)

Avery Blais's essay, "The RBG Within ME," secured her the High School prize. For this Grade 9 student of Mount Saint Charles Academy, RBG is a goal—a symbol of perseverance in paving the way for the next generation of Americans, serving as a reminder for Avery not to give up.

Information on the annual RBG Essay/Art Contest, this year's winners, as well as copies of the essays and an image of the winning artwork, may be found at [this link](#).



Ruth Bader Ginsburg Essay/Art Contest

Rhode Island elementary, middle and high School students are invited to submit drawings, essays on how iconic U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has inspired them.

Each year, Roger Williams University School of Law, Rhode Island's only law school, invites Ocean State students from grades K through 12 to submit essays and drawings on how they have been inspired by the legacy of late Associate Justice Ruth

Bader Ginsburg of the Supreme Court of the United States, who passed away on September 18, 2020.

“Justice Ginsburg cared about equality for all people,” noted RWU Law Professor Emily Sack, who advises the school’s Women’s Law Society. “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.’ At RWU Law, we thought this essay contest would be 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.”

Elementary School Winner (Grades K-5)

"Equality for All People"

Visaagan Vipakaran, Woodridge Elementary School, Grade 5



Visaagan Vipakaran and Winning Artwork - "Equality for All People."

Middle School Winner (Grades 6-8)

"The Great Influence of Ruth Bader Ginsburg"

Reese Lourenco, Segue Institute for Learning, Grade 6



RWU Law Women's Law Society President Andrea Staehelin L'24 with Reese Lourenco

“Fight for the things you care about. But do it in a way that will lead others to join you.” That is the famous quote of a woman named Joan Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was the first Jewish woman and the second woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Born March 15, 1933, she led the fight against gender discrimination and successfully argued six cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a passionate woman who fought for equality and justice, and is remembered for her pathbreaking opinions on major issues, such as women’s rights, voting rights, and health care.

She believed that all people should have equal rights, but her work to achieve equal rights for women was the focus of her career. In a 1979 case, she challenged the notion that girls were less fit to serve on the jury. Ruth Bader Ginsburg explained in 2009, “Women belong in all places where decisions are being made”— including juries. “It shouldn’t be that women are the exception.” She also championed these 5 laws to support gender equality; the Equal Pay Act, Title IX, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. This inspired me because soon, at my school, I will be a 6th grade community leader, and the bravery Ruth Bader Ginsburg had as a leader is like an example for what I have to achieve as one. Community leaders are students who are selected to be the voice of the students and speak for the students and what they all as a collective believe in, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg has shown me what you need to be able to do in order to be successful in the role as a leader.

Another way she was an inspiration is the fact that even though she was sick with colon cancer, she kept working at the Supreme Court. Ruth Bader Ginsburg had her first experience with cancer in 1999 when the doctors discovered colon cancer at an early stage by accident because of an unrelated abdominal infection. 10 years later, when she was undergoing regular screenings, doctors discovered pancreatic cancer and removed part of her pancreas and her spleen. This is inspiring because although she was sick, she never stopped fighting for what she believed in and what she thought was better for the world. It tells me that even if something bad is going on in my life, I should still be true to my role as a community leader.

In conclusion, Ruth Bader Ginsburg has inspired me and the entire world with her bravery and perseverance. Although she’s not with us anymore, she will always be remembered for her accomplishments to make the world a better place. Ruth Bader Ginsburg is such an inspiration on people who will take over roles as types of leaders, including me taking on the role as community leader. To me, she is a symbol of hope and perseverance and just inspires me to keep pushing on.

High School Winner (Grades 9-12)

“The RBG Within ME”

Avery Blais, Mount Saint Charles Academy, Grade 9



RWU Law Women's Law Society President Andrea Staehelin L'24 with Avery Blais

I stand on the starting line at the Track at New Balance, overwhelmed. A freshman girl, running against 12 varsity boys, preparing to run as hard as I can. Ruth Bader Ginsberg, the notorious RBG, probably felt a similar feeling to the one that I feel during this moment. A young woman, paired against people who were biologically stronger, but mentally my equal. It's overwhelming, maximally infuriating. She must have felt the nervous pressure weighing down on her chest, chasing impossible standards, but determined for an equal chance as every man had. How could a young Jewish teenager growing up in a close-minded 1940's society, with twisted idealistic and unrealistic expectations on what it is to be a woman, become the renowned Justice we know of today? She grew through education, using it as a weapon in a male dominated profession, being one of the few women and top students in her 1954 Cornell class. She was able to rise above the scrutiny of a young woman abandoning the idea of a nuclear family for Harvard Law, and later Columbia, where she graduated first in her class. All

this success without the support of her older sister and mother, whom she lost before graduating from high school.

Attorney Bader Ginsberg challenged the letter of the law, winning five major Supreme Court sex-discrimination cases when she was the Project Litigator for the ACLU. She impacted the world I live in, the rights I have, even before sitting on the Supreme Court. She allowed marginalized people to be spoken for, and was an advocate for equal rights. She knew how it felt to be looked down upon and expected less of, all because of the fact she had ovaries. Ruth Bader Ginsberg, the Columbia graduate, one of America's most renowned feminists, was once a 14-year-old girl. All this, because she had the will to chase the same chance afforded to men.

RBG once said, "When I'm sometimes asked when there will be enough (women judges on the US Supreme Court bench)", I say, "When there are nine. People are shocked. But there'd be nine men, and nobody's ever raised a question about that." She was once me. To me, RBG is a goal. She is an inspiration, and a hero who paved the way for the next generation of Americans. No matter the gender or race, everyone shares a responsibility to protect the constitution and the rights reflected in it. My feet lift off the track, and I begin. Failure was not an option for her, it's not an option for me either.