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Categories:

[Diversity, Equity,
Inclusion & Belonging](#)
[Press Releases](#)

Frost Brown Todd Selects Seven Students for Annual Zenobia Harris Bivens Diversity Scholarship

Frost Brown Todd (FBT) selected seven students who are pursuing a career in law for the firm's annual FBT Zenobia Harris Bivens Diversity Scholarship.

This year's recipients attend the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, University of Akron School of Law, Georgetown University Law Center, Penn State Law, Notre Dame Law School, and Indiana University Robert McKinney School of Law. Their unique life experiences have greatly influenced their goals of making a difference through law. One is a granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, while others survived abuse and racism. There are immigrants from Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, some of whom came to America as refugees of political persecution and violence.

Established in 2010, the FBT Diversity Scholarship Fund was renamed last year in honor of FBT's former Houston Partner-in-Charge Zenobia Bivens, a champion of diversity, equity and inclusion who unexpectedly passed away in 2022. This year's recipients are the first to be recognized under the scholarship's new name and represent one of the largest groups of individual recipients in the history of the scholarship.

The FBT Zenobia Harris Bivens Diversity Scholarship aims to support students in their education and exploration of the legal field. In the past 10 years, FBT has awarded nearly \$70,000 to more than 30 students attending law school in 10 states across the U.S. Recipients must be a law student at an ABA-accredited law school or an undergraduate who intends to pursue law. These students demonstrated academic excellence, service to the profession, service to the community, and a commitment to diversity.

[Visit the FBT Zenobia Harris Bivens Diversity Scholarship Page](#)
The full list of scholarship recipients includes:

Shayna Yogman is a 1L at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law with two master's degrees. She was inspired to work to end discrimination and fight for a safer, equitable world by her grandfather's escape from Auschwitz. She has worked as a research assistant on a federal lawsuit in which the plaintiffs won a significant victory against the white supremacists who helped organize the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, VA. Yogman had a nine-year tenure at the Anti-Defamation League and organized the largest Holocaust remembrance program in the Western United States.

Tolulope Ajifowobaje is a 3L at the University of Akron School of Law. She migrated to the U.S. in 2019 after earning a master's in law at the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. Ajifowobaje has more than a decade in the legal field, starting first as a legal officer at the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission before eventually establishing her own practice, Ajifowobaje & Co, where she assisted clients with matters related to constitutional law, contracts, corporate law, and land ownership and is still licensed to practice in Nigeria. Ajifowobaje later enrolled in law school and then became a single mother of two after losing her husband to cancer two weeks after her family immigrated to America. Since then, she has earned a position in the top 5% of her class and is on track to graduate in May 2023.

NinaSimone Edwards is a 2L at the Georgetown University Law Center. She grew up experiencing racism in both subtle and disturbing ways, motivating her to pursue a career in law. She is a public interest and RISE fellow, a member of the Women of Color Collective, and communications director for the Black Law Students Association. She works as a translator with the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala and volunteers at homeless shelters in and around Washington, D.C. Edwards also clerked with the Migrant Legal Action Program. She earned her bachelor's degree in political science, taught literacy through the AmeriCorps program and as a Fulbright scholar, and led sessions on social justice at Camp Equity.

Muhammad Ali Ilahi is a 1L at Penn State Law. Born in Pakistan, he earned his bachelor's in finance from the Lahore University of

Management Sciences and a master's in public administration from Cornell University. He served as president of the Cornell Pakistan Society and was a graduate student coordinator for the Office of Academic Diversity Initiatives and a delegate at the World Government Summit in Dubai. Ilahi interned with a refugee support organization in Greece, where he taught language and professional development classes. He has been an advocate for the rights of asylees in the U.S. and has closely worked with the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Program to bring to light some of the issues facing asylees in the national media.

Luwam Gabreselassie is a 1L at Notre Dame Law School. Born in Eastern Africa, she escaped war and political oppression, living in a refugee camp in Ethiopia before receiving asylum in the U.S. She is the first in her family to graduate college, earning bachelor's degrees in law, societies and justice and environmental science. She worked as a paralegal at a nonprofit focused on exonerating wrongfully incarcerated individuals and contributed to scholarly research examining the health disparities in the African immigrant community and the ways in which the stigma surrounding HIV can be a barrier to testing and treatment. Gabreselassie also started a nonprofit that advocates for Eritreans in Washington State.

Valeri Simmons is a 2L at Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law. Growing up in a large family, she sought financial independence by bussing tables for loose change. At 16, she left an abusive home for a residential high school for gifted and talented students. She later earned her bachelor's in security and risk analysis through Penn State University's distance learning program. While at McKinney, she founded a National Lawyers Guild Chapter (voted "Best New Student Organization") and the Feminist Law Society and joined the Indiana Law Review. Simmons also serves as a board member on the Lambda Law Society and mentors pre-law students through the school's Pathway to the Law program. She recently revised the upcoming "Bench Guide" for the Indiana State Bar Association's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee. Simmons also clerked with the Indiana Court of Appeals and the Indiana Attorney General Office's Consumer Protection Division, Data Privacy & Identity Theft Unit. She looks forward to entering the data privacy field after graduation.

Amerika Jayme is a 1L at Penn State Law whose family migrated to the U.S. to escape escalating violence in Juarez, Mexico, settling in different cities across the Southwest where her family worked odd jobs so that their children could someday attend college. Jayme earned a bachelor's in political science from St. Mary's University. She worked as an admissions counselor at the University of Texas in El Paso (UTEP) where she exposed countless students to the benefits of higher education, helping them apply for college and obtain grants and tuition waivers. At the same time, she earned a Master of Public Administration degree from UTEP.

About the Scholarship's Namesake

Zenobia Harris Bivens was an accomplished lawyer who championed diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. In the early part of her career, Bivens clerked for the Honorable Carl E. Stewart of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit and the Honorable Justice Dale Wainwright (ret.) of the Texas Supreme Court. As a more seasoned attorney, she served as counsel in cases involving NASA, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, among many others. Bivens was also relentless in her pursuit for justice, and this was evident in her pro bono advocacy work where she was particularly passionate about helping those who had been denied justice by the legal system.

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