



WOMEN'S WHITE COLLAR  
DEFENSE ASSOCIATION®

# **The WWCDA Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Outstanding Law Student Award**

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## The WWCDA Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Outstanding Law Student Award

In honor of the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the Women's White Collar Defense Association (WWCDA) established the WWCDA Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Outstanding Law Student Award to be given annually to a woman in the final year of her legal education who best exemplifies the Justice's commitment to excellence, perseverance, resilience, extraordinary work ethic, and/or tireless efforts to ensure justice for all. We seek your assistance in identifying and nominating one or more female students who would qualify for the Award. The deadline for nominations is September 15, 2023.

The recipient of the WWCDA Justice Ginsburg Award will be recognized at the WWCDA Awards Dinner Gala in Washington D.C. on November 28, 2023, and will be given the opportunity to avail herself of mentoring sessions by WWCDA members for one year following her law school graduation. More details on the event, the WWCDA Justice Ginsburg Award and nominee criteria can be found at [wwcda.org](http://wwcda.org).

To nominate a student for the WWCDA Justice Ginsburg Award, please complete the nomination form at [wwcda.org/event/awards-program](http://wwcda.org/event/awards-program). Also, please send a nomination letter/email that details the student's eligibility. Each nominee must also send a personal statement explaining her interest in receiving the Award and why she is qualified. She may add to the statement why the mentoring services of WWCDA members will be helpful. We also encourage other letters of recommendation to be sent in support of the nominee. All letters/emails/personal statement should be sent by email to [awards@wwcda.org](mailto:awards@wwcda.org) by September 15, 2023.



**JUSTICE RUTH  
BADER GINSBURG**

Founded in 1999, WWCDA is an organization committed to uplifting and empowering women in law around the globe. Our 3,000+ members in 48 chapters throughout the world are attorneys and other professionals who specialize in the representation of corporations, other organizations and individuals facing government enforcement actions (criminal, civil, regulatory, and administrative), and in internal investigations, compliance and ethics matters. WWCDA's mission is to promote diversity in the legal profession, organize business activities to facilitate networking and business development opportunities for women in the practice, and provide educational programming. Many of the WWCDA chapter members previously served in government positions and in corporate roles. Many WWCDA alumnae currently serve in high ranking government and corporate positions.

As part of WWCDA's core mission to promote equality and inclusion within the legal field, WWCDA established the Justice Ginsburg Award. The Award honors Justice Ginsburg's impressive legacy of courage, resilience, and commitment to equal rights.

## Eligibility for the WWCD Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Outstanding Law Student Award

Nominees for the WWCD Justice Ginsburg Award must be fulltime law students enrolled in the final year of legal studies as a day or evening student in a fully accredited law program. Additionally, in law school and/or the community, nominees must embody in some significant way the spirit and characteristics that made Justice Ginsburg such an esteemed leader and successful advocate. Specifically, nominees must demonstrate one or more of the following characteristics embodied by Justice Ginsburg:

- **Excellence, skill, and passion in legal studies or in advocacy opportunities** pursued on behalf of others or in other activities that benefit others. For example, nominees may have excelled in providing services to pro bono clients in clinical or practical application classes or under a student practice rule, or in participating in mock trial or moot court activities.
- **Tenacity, resilience and optimism in meeting and overcoming obstacles**, whether personal or professional. For example, nominees may be/have been parenting or acting as a caretaker for someone else or shouldering other significant personal responsibilities while attending law school or may have suffered significant loss or traumatic injury during law school.
- **A commitment to social justice and diversity** through activities undertaken during law school or previously. For example, nominees may have founded a legal aid or social justice group, or led groups engaged in peaceful protests or other activities designed to inspire a more just society or greater access to justice.
- **A personal warmth and generosity that inspires deep loyalty and affection** from colleagues, even (and especially) those with different backgrounds and/or legal philosophies. For example, nominees may be highly regarded by and/or have strong friendships with adversaries in a matter or with individuals who have different beliefs.



**Nancy Eriksen 2022 WWCD Justice Ginsburg Law Student Award Recipient**



The Award recipient will be honored at the WWCD Awards Dinner Gala held in Washington, D.C. annually on the last Tuesday in November. The recipient will also be given the opportunity to avail herself of mentoring sessions by WWCD members for one year following her law school graduation.

## The WWCDA Justice Ginsburg Award

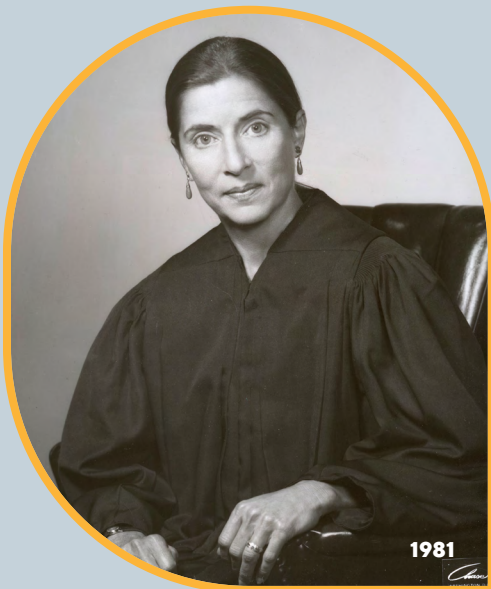
commemorates the Justice's extraordinary life, her powerful advocacy for gender equality and significant impact on American jurisprudence, particularly in the area of civil rights. She was a role model to women of all ages, and particularly to the younger generations. The Award celebrates those characteristics for which the Justice was best known, including her outstanding legal scholarship and expertise, her relentless optimism and commitment to social justice, her advocacy for women, and her tenacity and resilience in the face of obstacles (both personal and professional) to become one of the most effective and consequential lawyers and jurists in American history. The Award celebrates the Justice's commitment to helping those who came after her to surmount similar obstacles in their own endeavors and to participate in the legal process and increase access to justice for all. Finally, the Award celebrates Justice Ginsburg's ability to win the respect, loyalty, and even affection of others with whom she did not share the same background, gender, legal philosophies, or social views.

Simply put, Justice Ginsburg was an extraordinary human being. Justice Ginsburg was not only a lifelong champion for gender equality and the second woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, but she was also a towering example of unflinching excellence, moral fortitude, effortless grace, endless generosity and enviable resilience. All female lawyers owe Justice Ginsburg an immense debt, not only for her tireless work to dismantle legal stereotypes that reinforced unfounded distinctions between men and women, but also more broadly for her pathbreaking career, in which she personally overcame innumerable obstacles to her professional advancement and relentlessly pursued justice for all.

Born Joan Ruth Bader to a father who emigrated from Ukraine and a mother who was raised by parents

who were also recent European immigrants, Justice Ginsburg was brought up in Brooklyn, New York. She faced significant obstacles early in life, losing her mother before she completed her high school education. Notwithstanding, Justice Ginsburg was a stellar student, obtaining her bachelor's degree Phi Beta Kappa from Cornell University, where she met her beloved husband to be, Marty Ginsburg.

One of only nine women admitted to Harvard Law School in 1956, she and the other female students were challenged by Dean Erwin Griswold as to why they were occupying seats that, in his view, should be filled by men. Undeterred, Justice Ginsburg excelled at Harvard and made law review while caring for the first of her two children and also her husband Marty while he battled cancer. Justice Ginsburg ultimately graduated as one of the top two students in her class at Columbia Law School (after transferring there to accommodate her husband's job in New York).







Despite her achievements, not a single New York law firm would hire her. Although she was recommended for a U.S. Supreme Court clerkship with Justice Felix Frankfurter, he refused to hire her because she was a woman. She eventually clerked for District Judge Edmund Palmieri only after her law school professor threatened not to send the Justice another law clerk unless he hired his star student. Thereafter, Justice Ginsburg became a professor at Rutgers Law School where she was told that her pay would be less than the male professors because she had a husband who earned a good income.

All of this discrimination, then entirely commonplace in the profession, motivated Justice Ginsburg to devote her legal career to dismantling societal impediments to women in the workplace. Another key motivating factor for Justice Ginsburg was her time in Sweden. In 1962, while working on a comparative law project for Columbia Law

School, Justice Ginsburg was deeply inspired by the opportunities for advancement of women in Sweden that were not similarly available to women in the United States. "I guess I knew inequality existed [in the United States], but it was just part of the scenery. It was the way things were. . . You had to cope with it." Justice Ginsburg said, "My eyes were opened up . . . My thought processes were stimulated in Sweden. I saw what was wrong and what needed to change in the U.S.A."<sup>1</sup>

That Justice Ginsburg became the first female tenured professor at Columbia Law School, and the second woman to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, and ultimately the U.S. Supreme Court, while at the same time battling multiple instances of cancer and successfully raising two children, is a testament to Justice Ginsburg's extraordinary work ethic and unwavering perseverance to, in her words, "fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you." A titan among jurists, Justice Ginsburg's brilliant decisions and powerful dissents paved the way for generations of women attorneys. It is because of Justice Ginsburg's groundbreaking work and jurisprudence that many WWCD members could attend law school, serve as law clerks, and achieve professional success including serving in high level positions in both the private and public sectors while at the same time having fulfilling partnerships and raising families. As Justice Ginsburg once remarked: "We are at last beginning to relegate to the history books the idea of the token woman." In short, the WWCD and its members are a testament to her legacy.

Further, beyond her excellence and courage in her legal endeavors and her triumphs over many personal challenges, Justice Ginsburg was beloved by all who had the good fortune of knowing her, forming deep lifelong friendships with so many people from a broad array of backgrounds, legal philosophies, and social views.



<sup>1</sup> Petula, Dvorak, Ruth Bader Ginsburg Had to Leave America to See How Unfairly it Treated Women," WASHINGTON POST, Sept. 24, 2020, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/09/24/rbg-ruth-bader-ginsburg-sweden-equality-women/>.