



NCBP 2022 – 2023 Diversity Scholar Feature



Francis Adewale

Treasurer, Washington State Bar Association

Francis Adewale was elected to the Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association in 2021 and elected by the Board as treasurer in 2022. Francis is one of the attorneys that helped establish Spokane Community Court. Francis' commitment to community and movement lawyering is epitomized by his work on several community based board and activities in Eastern Washington.

He has served as chair of Refugee Connections Spokane, co-chair of Spokane Homeless Coalition, Spokane County Regional Law & Justice Council's Racial Equity Disparity Committee, member/trustee of Spokane County Bar Association and the Volunteer Lawyers Program. He is former chair of Washington State Access to Justice Board and a member of Washington State Supreme Court's Interpreters Commission. He is currently a board member of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) and an adjunct faculty member of both Whitworth University and Gonzaga Law School. He has been a founding member of the Washington Statewide Reentry Council having been reappointed thrice by Governor Jay Inslee.

What have you learned about yourself through participation in the Diversity Scholars program?

I learned that the challenges we face in Washington are not unique and we can network with others to share ideas to resolve them while holding each other accountable.

What would you say to encourage others to apply and participate in the Diversity Scholars program?

This program has been the highlight of my term as treasurer of the Washington State Bar Association, some of the ideas I gained from attending NCBP committee meetings and conferences were all incorporated into our Board of Governors leadership goals this year. I paid my way to attend the first conference in Chicago as my association did not pay for me to attend because I realize the tremendous value the program provides for bar leaders of color like me. I came back loaded with ideas and subsequently got elected treasurer. I urge any aspiring bar leaders to apply for this program, you will not regret it.

Why is DEI important to you and why should it be important to bar leaders?

James Madison once concluded that a key problem in designing a system of government was how to manage factional tensions, given the readiness of groups to pursue their own interests at other's expense. Over 200 years later, this is still a key problem in the management of governments, corporations, bar

leadership and organizations of all sorts. Effective leaders engage a range of individuals & institutions to help identify problems, understand issues & develop strategies for change. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion seeks a pathway to action that involves a decision-making process in which everyone's ideas are aired, discussed, assessed and ultimately a course of action agreed upon. Every person agrees to the course of action, and even if they do not feel that it is their first choice or the best decision, they are still willing to honor the agreement and implement it. This is crucial for bar leaders to understand, the Hope Based Leadership dynamic we learned at the Bar leader conference make this imperative a call to action.