

FIRM NEWS

Schulte Roth & Zabel Founding Partner William D. Zabel to Join Justice for Greenwood Board

January 18, 2022

Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP and the Justice for Greenwood Foundation are pleased to announce the appointment of SRZ founding partner William D. Zabel to the board of the Justice for Greenwood Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization that seeks truth, justice, and reparations for the victims of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and its over 100 years of continuing harm.

Mr. Zabel's appointment marks his latest role in a decades-long pursuit of social justice and comes at a pivotal moment for Justice for Greenwood (J4G) as Schulte Roth & Zabel (SRZ), J4G, and a team of civil and human rights lawyers argued for the U.S. Department of Justice to conduct a neutral, third-party investigation into the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and its aftermath following the discovery of new mass gravesites in late 2020.

In addition to his deep experience and the significant pro bono resources he brings through SRZ, Mr. Zabel will be instrumental in raising funds critical to the success of J4G's mission.

"Organizations like Justice for Greenwood rely upon our advocates within the legal community, bringing expertise and visibility to an injustice that has, for more than a century, remained tragically hidden and unaddressed," said Damario Solomon-Simmons, Managing Partner, SolomonSimmonsLaw, and Founder, Executive Director, and Chairman of the Board of Justice for Greenwood. "Bill Zabel is one of our strongest proponents and voices, and SRZ's consistent dedication to our effort to seek justice for the victims of the Massacre has been indispensable.

Without a doubt, the success of our movement to date would not have occurred without the considerable support of Bill and his dedicated team of professionals.”

Mr. Zabel, who heads SRZ’s Individual Client Services Group, has spearheaded the firm’s substantial pro bono engagement with J4G and has been a driving force behind the legal profession’s cause for social justice and human rights for more than 50 years. He has received recognition for his advice and advocacy in support of national and global causes, including writing the amicus brief on behalf of the ACLU in the landmark case *Loving v. Virginia*, serving as the chair of Human Rights First from 2000 to 2020 and is presently chair of Immigrant Justice Corps and establishing a professorship in human rights at his alma mater, Harvard Law School.

“Justice for Greenwood is a model for social justice and human rights, creating a platform that will change the way we understand the Tulsa Race Massacre,” said Mr. Zabel. “Of all the causes I have had the privilege to work on throughout my career, this is the most egregious example of blatant and unresolved racial violence and injustice in our nation’s history. We intend to not only bring justice and closure to the victims of the Massacre, but to put an end to the active, racist measures being taken now to prevent this case from moving forward.”

Mr. Zabel’s pivotal work on the J4G board is in addition to SRZ’s pro bono representation of Justice for Greenwood, supporting its mission to revitalize the Greenwood community through advocacy and direct services to lift the community out of poverty and to address the major areas of inequality and injustice directly caused by the Massacre. SRZ attorneys act as outside general counsel to J4G and SRZ staff also volunteer hundreds of hours to J4G’s Descendant Outreach Project.

Partnering as co-counsel with Mr. Solomon-Simmons, SRZ also represents the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre’s only known three living survivors as well as descendants of victims in the groundbreaking lawsuit *Randle v. City of Tulsa et. al*. The suit makes the case that the City of Tulsa and others created a public nuisance of racial disparities, economic inequalities, insecurity, and trauma. It also seeks to force the City to directly address the negative conditions in Greenwood that stemmed from the Massacre and to establish a compensation fund for its victims and their descendants.

The Massacre occurred from May 31 through June 1, 1921, when a large White mob, including members of the Tulsa Police Department, the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, the Tulsa County Sheriff's Department and the Oklahoma National Guard, as well as other city and county leaders, destroyed a peaceful, prosperous Black community in North Tulsa (Greenwood), killing hundreds of Black residents, injuring thousands more, burning down over one-thousand homes and businesses, and stealing residents' personal property, causing damage in today's dollars of an estimated \$200 million.

SRZ is committed to righting the wrongs caused by Tulsa Race Massacre and preserving the true history and narratives of the Greenwood community. To that end, the firm also serves as pro bono counsel to the HB 1775 litigation, challenging the State of Oklahoma's HB 1775 law, in partnership with the American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Oklahoma, and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. HB 1775 severely restricts public school teachers and students from learning and talking about race and gender in the classroom, undermines students' and teachers' First Amendment rights to discuss race and gender issues, and prevents open conversations around American history, including the experiences of historically marginalized groups.

Schulte Roth & Zabel is committed to supporting pro bono causes that encourage open discussion and education about race, diversity, civil rights, voting rights, access to justice and human rights.

About William D. Zabel and Schulte Roth & Zabel

Mr. Zabel is a founding partner of Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP, formed in 1969 with Paul N. Roth and Stephen J. Schulte. He is a member of the American Law Institute and the Council on Foreign Relations.

For more than 50 years, Mr. Zabel has been an advocate for social justice in the United States and abroad. His civic and philanthropic activities have included, among many others, investigating the cases of those who disappeared in Chile during General Augusto Pinochet's "Dirty War;" volunteer lawyer with Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee in Mississippi during the summer of 1964 and serving as chair of Human Rights First, and the chair of Immigrant Justice Corps.

In 2017, Mr. Zabel established the William D. Zabel '61 Professorship in Human Rights at Harvard Law School in order to further his commitment to protect the rights of others and to inspire future generations in the cause of human rights.

Mr. Zabel has received a Lifetime Achievement Award from The American Lawyer and has also been honored with the Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Award, Brandeis University Distinguished Community Service Award, the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights Extraordinary Leader Award, the Champion for Change Award from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Abuse Prevention and the inaugural Robert F. Kennedy Justice Prize from the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

About Justice for Greenwood

Justice for Greenwood is a network of volunteers, advocates, attorneys, academics, experts, Massacre Survivors, Descendants and others agitating for reparations & justice on behalf of Survivors and Descendants of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Through direct services, public education, and advocacy, J4G is working to mitigate the effects of the Massacre and its 100 years of continuing harm. The organization's work aims to revitalize the Greenwood community and to address the major areas of racial inequality and injustice directly caused by the Massacre: Health, Education, Real Estate, and Business. J4G also partners with national civil rights organizations, including *Color of Change*, *Equal Justice Initiative* and the *NAACP Legal Defense Fund*, as it pursues transparency, recognition and reparations around the events of May 1921.

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