



Name: Umutoni Sebunyenzi

Law School: Southern Illinois University Simmons School of Law

Internship Company: Bayer Corp.

Where You're From: St. Louis



Q. - What appeals to you about becoming a lawyer?

A. – Becoming a lawyer will allow me to continue advocating for justice in a meaningful and lasting way. It offers a platform to challenge systemic inequalities and work toward transformative legal and social change. My passion for advocacy and my desire to create inclusive environments drive my commitment to using the law to make a real impact.

Q. - Who has been a major influence or inspiration to you, and why?

A. - My dad has been one of my greatest inspirations. He navigated higher education while building strong friendships and raising a family, all while being new to the United States. Unfamiliar with the culture and learning a new language, his ability to do it all with strength and perseverance was remarkable. His dedication to helping refugees, both within our community and beyond, has deeply inspired me. This ongoing fight for justice reminds me daily to honor my cultural pride and diverse background. I want to carry that same drive and use my experiences to help myself and others grow. One conversation, one moment of connection, can change a life forever, and I never want to take that lightly.

Q. - What do you hope to accomplish in your career?

A. – I want to build a legal career where I advocate for meaningful change and stay rooted in the communities that matter to me. I want kids who look like me to see themselves in me and believe that they can achieve whatever they set their minds to. Representation is powerful. I hope that my journey shows others that you can succeed without changing who you are. Whether I am helping someone through a legal issue, challenging unjust systems, or just being a steady presence in the community, I want people to feel seen, supported, and reminded of their strength.

Q. - What do you hope to gain from your 2025 Summer Internship?

A. - I hope to gain hands-on legal experience and mentorship that will give me insight into the day-to-day life of attorneys. I am interested in learning how they manage risk and contribute to the company's success behind the scenes. I am also excited to see how all the different pieces of the business fit together and further learn how I can contribute to that process.

Q. - Just for fun, if you could only listen to one song for the rest of time - what would it be?

A. - So Strong by Labi Siffre. My Freedom School kids know it as "Something Inside So Strong." I listened to it every morning for 30 days straight for two consecutive summers, and it has stayed

with me ever since. This song helps me channel my inner child and serves as a powerful reminder of the strength we all carry within us. It continues to inspire me to stand tall in the face of adversity.

Q. - Is there anything else that you'd like for us to know about yourself?

A. – I speak five languages! While it can be challenging at times, being multilingual has allowed me to connect with people in the languages they feel most comfortable using. It has helped me dive into different cultures and break down language barriers, especially for those who may not always know how to speak up for themselves. This skill has strengthened my ability to advocate, listen, and lead with empathy.