There are three winners of the 2018 New Zealand Law Foundation Ethel Benjamin Scholarship, an award that supports postgraduate research in law that will protect and promote the legal interests of the New Zealand public.

This year’s recipients are Rez Gardi, Taylor Burgess and Kate Stone.

**Rez Gardi** studied at the University of Auckland, gaining a BA (double majoring in International Relations/Political Studies and Criminology) and a Bachelor of Laws (Hons), completing her studies in 2016.

She is currently working as a legal officer with the Human Rights Commission. Her advocacy work with national and international groups over the past three years led to her being named Young New Zealander of the Year in 2017, as well as receiving a Fulbright Graduate Award among a raft of other scholarships and awards.

Rez was born in a refugee camp in Pakistan to Kurdish activist parents. Her experiences there have shaped her world view, leading to her determination to make a difference.

“The circumstances I was born into have shaped my interest in peace, security, and humanitarian action,” says Rez. “I learnt about injustice and the denial of human rights long before I knew what those concepts meant. This instilled in me the importance of standing up for what is right, even when your life is on the line. As the daughter of human rights activists, an engrained passion for equality and justice inspired me to pursue a career in law. I wanted to understand the power of law to create positive change.”

“Today, there are approximately 65 million forcibly displaced persons, including over 21 million refugees. Responding to displacement around the world is a global responsibility,” she says.

“By pursing a Master of Laws focusing on the interface between refugee law and human rights, I will be better equipped to play a part in making a difference as an advocate in this global crisis, as well as sharing my learnings with others to ensure that we all do our part.” Rez plans to study towards an LLM at Harvard Law School.

Information about Taylor Burgess and Kate Stone, the other 2018 winners of this scholarship, is available on the LawFoundation’s web site.

The Ethel Benjamin scholarship honours New Zealand’s first woman barrister and solicitor, who was admitted to the bar in 1897. Since the centenary of this event, the Law Foundation has awarded this scholarship annually to outstanding New Zealand women law graduates for post-graduate study. The award is worth up to $50,000 and details of the award and previous winners can be found on the [Ethel Benjamin Scholarship page](#) of the Foundation’s website.