

THE NATIONAL BLACK LAWYERS  
TOP 100



*January 22, 2023 | 6:00 PM*  
*Loews Miami Beach Hotel*

# A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT LABARRON BOONE

As my term as President of The National Black Lawyers Top 100 comes to a glorious end and I reflect upon the past year, I remember when I first heard a whisper that turned into a shout saying, “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.”

I could not shake that inner voice urging me on, telling me to highlight the legal excellence within The National Black Lawyers Top 100. I could not shake that inner voice reminding me that this cohort of attorneys is in rarefied air and have used their positions to significantly change their communities, the country, and the world. I could not shake the reminder that, all too often, the accomplishments of African American lawyers are overlooked, undocumented and not celebrated. For these reasons, this year as President, I listened to that voice and created The National Black Lawyers Hall of Fame.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom.” Our Hall of Fame attorneys have stood in the face of true adversity and continuously worked for the freedom of all, especially the disenfranchised, injured, and future generations. They represent so many “firsts.” They have done, *and continue to do*, the hard work.

Tonight, we honor the inaugural six inductees of The National Black Lawyers Hall of Fame with a symbol of excellence so that all who come after us can see the glory bestowed on these honorees for their intelligence, service and acts of bravery which bent the arc of this nation towards justice.

Our inductees’ expertise extends across a broad range of legal specialties, demonstrating that there is not just one path towards lasting impact. We are proud to highlight the diversity of their experiences and their world-changing results.

We hope you enjoy this celebration of African American legal excellence. Our inductees are the history-makers, our generation’s heroes. Each has used the law as their weapon to fight for justice and truly make this nation live up to its commitment that “all men are created equal with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” We’re so glad you are here with us to celebrate them tonight.





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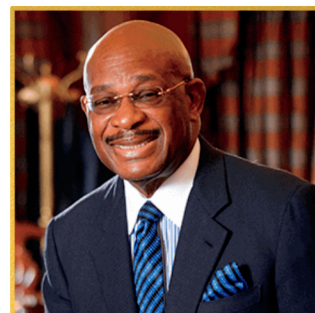
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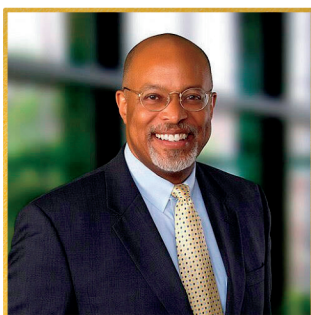
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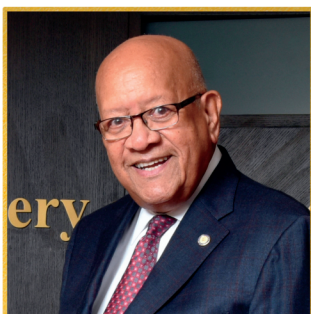
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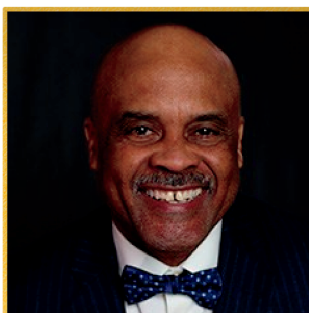
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# DINNER MENU

## Amuse Bouche

**Sunrise Gazpacho:** *heirloom tomato, mango,  
yellow bell pepper, sherry vinegar*

## First Course

**Red and Golden Beet Salad:** *baby arugula, orange segments,  
Humboldt Fog goat cheese, pomegranate dressing*

## Main Course

**Free Range Organic Chipotle-Rubbed Chicken Breast:**  
*citrus stone ground soft polenta, green bean trio,  
rainbow cauliflower, Campari tomato, chicken jus*

## Dessert

**Jivara Chocolate Fudge Cake:** *caramelia ganache,  
candied hazelnuts, Bahibe mousse quenelle*

Seattle's Best™ coffee, decaffeinated coffee, and a selection of teas



## ABOUT

# BARBARA R. ARNWINE

Barbara R. Arnwine, President and Founder of the Transformative Justice Coalition, is internationally renowned for contributions on critical justice issues, including the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1991 and the 2006 reauthorization of provisions of the Voting Rights Act. She also serves as Co-Chair and Facilitator of the National Commission for Voter Justice, the Millennial Votes Matters Convenings and The Voting Rights Alliance.

From February 1989 to June 2015, Ms. Arnwine served as President and Executive Director of the national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and now holds the honorific title of President Emeritus. She has served as the Charles Hamilton Houston Chair for North Carolina Central University School of Law (2016-2017) and taught at Columbia University School of Law. She also served as a founder and leader of Election Protection (the nation's largest nonpartisan voter protection coalition); Board Vice President of National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty; member of the advance team of Lawyers' Committee's South Africa Electoral Observers Delegation; National Convener of the National Conference on African American Women and the Law (later leading a delegation to the NGO Forum and Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing); and helped draft provisions of the program for action for the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Xenophobia in Durban, South Africa.



In 2011, Ms. Arnwine created the legendary Voting Rights "Map of Shame", which exposed the new modern wave of voter suppression proposals and legislation across the United States. She is the radio host of "Igniting Change with Barbara Arnwine", a regular presence in national media, and is often quoted in the press. A graduate of Scripps College and Duke University School of Law, Ms. Arnwine continues to champion civil rights and racial justice issues nationally and internationally in the areas of housing and lending; women's rights, especially issues affecting intersectionality and African American women and girls; community development; employment; voting; education; policing restructuring; and environmental justice.

Ms. Arnwine's groundbreaking civil rights and human rights advocacy has been honored with many prestigious awards, including Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Hubert H. Humphrey Civil and Human Rights Award and the prestigious Gruber International Justice Prize for her excellence in defending and promoting civil rights and gender equity throughout the United States. Most recently, on May 2, 2021, Duke University conferred upon her the Honorary Doctorate of Law.







# ABOUT FRED D. GRAY

Fred David Gray is a pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement and a native of Montgomery, Alabama. He is one of the few courageous Black lawyers who risked their lives to attack segregation in the court. He currently lives in Tuskegee, Alabama with his lovely wife, Carol, and, at 92 years old, continues to practice law specializing in civil rights litigation.

Mr. Gray was educated at the Nashville Christian Institute, Alabama State University, and Case Western Reserve University. He is both a lawyer and an ordained minister in the Church of Christ. In his first civil rights case, in March 1955, Mr. Gray represented Claudette Colvin, a 15-year old African American high school student who refused to give up her seat on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama. In December 1955, he represented Mrs. Rosa Parks, who ignited the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Mr. Gray penned the Resolution that launched the Boycott and was also Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s first civil rights attorney.



The civil rights cases that Mr. Gray has won have transformed this country and are in most constitutional law textbooks. They include, but are not limited to, the following: *Browder v. Gayle* (1956), challenging the constitutionality of Alabama state laws mandating segregation on buses and ultimately leading the US Supreme Court to order integrated buses in Montgomery; *Mitchell v. Johnson* (1966), one of the first civil actions brought to remedy systematic exclusion of blacks from the civil jury pool; *Lee v. Macon County Board of Education* (1967), as lead trial counsel, along with civil rights icons Jack Greenberg and Constance Baker Motley, Mr. Gray obtained a trial order that desegregated all Alabama public schools; *Gomillion v. Lightfoot* (1960), leading the Supreme Court to find that an electoral district with boundaries created to disenfranchise African Americans violated the Fifteenth Amendment (now quoted in over 600 federal court opinions); *Knight v. Alabama* (1995), where the Eleventh Circuit held that there were still vestiges of racial discrimination in higher education in Alabama; *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* (1961), leading the 5th Circuit to end the doctrine that colleges and universities could act in loco parentis to discipline or expel their students; and *Williams v. Wallace* (1965), class action suit brought by African Americans against Governor Wallace and the State of Alabama, where the court ordered Governor Wallace and the State of Alabama to protect marchers as they walked from Selma to Montgomery to present grievances as a result of being unable to vote. The publicity of these actions led to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

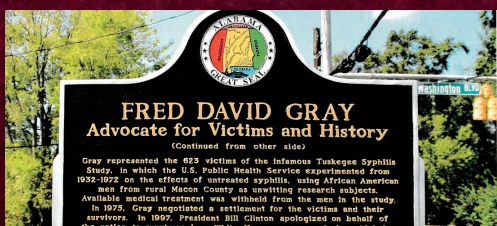
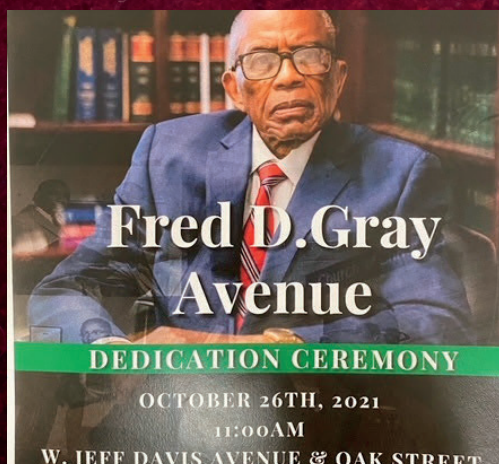
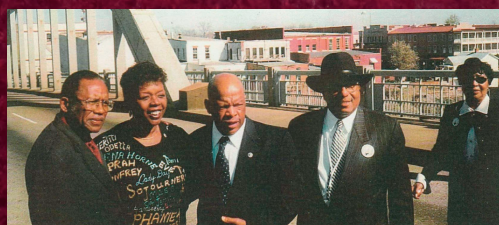


In *Pollard v. United States of America* (1974), which preserved and protected the rights of persons involved in the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study, Mr. Gray encouraged the President of the United States to make an official apology to the participants, who also requested a memorial in their honor. The apology was made at the White House in May 1997.

One of the first African Americans to serve in the Alabama Legislature since Reconstruction, Mr. Gray served from 1970-1974. He is the managing shareholder in the law firm of Gray, Langford, Sapp, McGowan, Gray, Gray & Nathanson P.C., with offices in Montgomery and Tuskegee, Alabama.

Mr. Gray has received numerous awards, honors, honorary Doctor of Laws degrees, and honorary Degrees of Humane Letters. His contributions also have been noted by historic markers erected in front of the Supreme Court of Alabama (2015) and in Tuskegee, Alabama (2016). He has been appointed to the Charles Hamilton Houston Chair in Law at The North Carolina Central University School of Law (December 2000); honored by Lipscomb University by the naming of the Fred D. Gray Institute for Law, Justice & Society in recognition of his commitment to civil rights and against racism; and was the moving force in the establishment of the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center, which serves as a memorial to the Study participants, educates the public on contributions in the field of human and civil rights by Native Americans and Americans of African and European descent, and strives to educate on the role Tuskegee-Macon County played in the Civil Rights Movement.

On July 7, 2022, President Joseph Biden awarded Mr. Gray with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, this country's highest award for a civilian. Mr. Gray's life mission has been to "stamp out discrimination," and that is what he continues to do.





# ABOUT ELAINE R. JONES

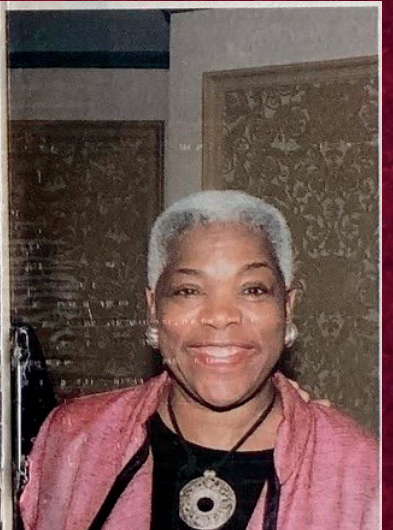
From 1993 to 2004, Elaine R. Jones served as President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF). The first woman to head the organization, she brought with her vast experience as a litigator and civil rights activist, and a passion for fairness and equality that began with her mother, an elementary and middle school teacher, and her father, a Pullman porter and member of the nation's first black trade union.

After graduating with honors in political science from Howard University, Ms. Jones joined the Peace Corps and became one of the first African Americans to serve in Turkey. This began a long series of "firsts" in her career. She was the first black woman to graduate from the University of Virginia School of Law, and later, the first African American elected to serve on the American Bar Association's (ABA) Board of Governors. Upon graduation from law school, she was invited to join one of Wall Street's most prestigious firms. Instead, she joined LDF where, apart from two years as Special Assistant to the United States Secretary of Transportation, she remained for 32-years of her career, litigating and directing LDF's legislative, judicial, and public policy initiatives. She blazed countless trails, becoming one of the first African American women to defend death row inmates. Only two years out of law school, Ms. Jones was a counsel of record in *Furman v. Georgia*, a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that abolished the death penalty in 37 states. She also argued numerous employment discrimination cases, including class actions against some of the nation's largest employers (e.g., *Patterson v. American Tobacco Co.*, *Stallworth v. Monsanto*, and *Swint v. Pullman Standard*).



Ms. Jones holds sixteen honorary degrees and the Jefferson Medal of Freedom, University of Virginia's highest honor. Additional awards include: first woman recipient of National Bar Association's C. Francis Stratford Award (its highest honor), first recipient of DC Bar's Brennan Award, Washington Bar Association's Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion (its highest honor), ABA's Thurgood Marshall Award, National Council of Jewish Women's Hannah G. Solomon Award, American Lawyer Lifetime Achievement Award, National Newspaper Publishers Association's First Public Service Award, ABA's Commission on Women in the Profession (Margaret Brent Award) and The Trial Lawyer Hall of Fame. In December 2000, President Clinton presented her with the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award and, in May 2022, the University of Virginia School of Law dedicated her portrait.





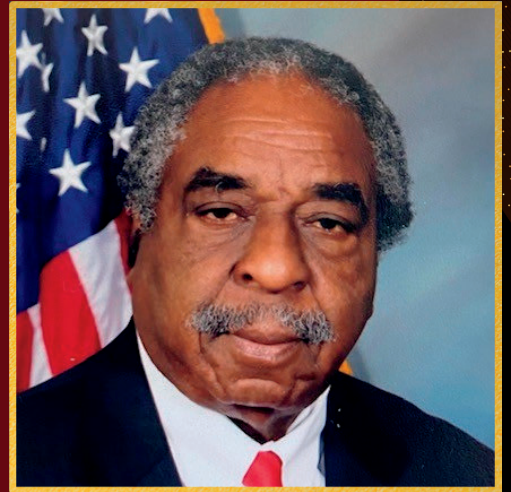
CAROLINE KENNEDY

For Elaine,  
You ARE the Problem  
Course Award! Thank you  
for making it mean so much.  
We love you and are grateful.  
Caroline



# ABOUT JUDGE CHARLES PRICE

Growing up in Hunter Station, Alabama, Retired Judge Charles Price experienced and observed the challenges and courage of the working poor, which imbued him with a strong moral compass and a deep commitment to serve others. He served in the Army as a paratrooper, Green Beret, and in the Reserve, ultimately retiring as a Lt. Colonel. Upon graduating from Virginia Union University and George Washington University School of Law (with honors), he first worked in the United States Department of Justice before returning to Alabama to become an Assistant Attorney General. Later, he served with distinction as Acting District Attorney for Escambia County, Alabama (the first African American District Attorney in Alabama), and as Assistant District Attorney for Montgomery County.

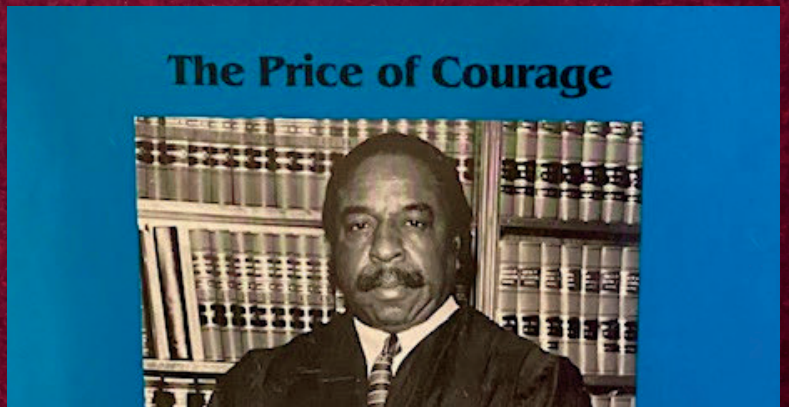


For 32 years, Judge Price served as a model Circuit Judge for Montgomery County, retiring in 2015 as Presiding Judge. His ethical standards and unflinching courage in protecting the rights of all were recognized in 1997 when he became the 1st African American recipient of the John F. Kennedy Profiles in Courage Award for “the integrity and political courage he demonstrated by reversing his own decision and ruling that [a] fellow Circuit Court Judge must remove or modify his courtroom display of the Ten Commandments, so as not to violate the First Amendment.” Judge Price stood against local and national attacks, including the Governor’s threat to use the National Guard and state troopers to prevent the order’s execution, a US House of Representatives vote and nonbinding resolution in support of the display, and the US Senate Majority leader support of the offending judge. On January 6, 1999, Judge Price was unanimously elected Presiding Judge of the 15th Judicial Circuit, and in 2009, the Montgomery County Commission unanimously voted to rename the Montgomery County Courthouse the Phelps-Price Justice Center.

Judge Price has served as President of the Alabama Circuit Judge’s Association, President of The Montgomery Chamber of Commerce, and Chair of the Alabama Ethics Commission. He co-authored the Alabama Peace Officers’ Guide to Law Enforcement, served on Boards of Directors of many organizations, organized a comprehensive Judicial Seminar at Yale University Law School and helped organize and establish Gerry Spence Thunderhead Judicial College. He also has sponsored numerous job fairs to help combat chronic unemployment.

Currently, Judge Price manages Price Law Group and is a Senior Advisor to the Honorable Steven Reed, Mayor of the City of Montgomery.







# ABOUT HEZEKIAH SISTRUNK, JR.

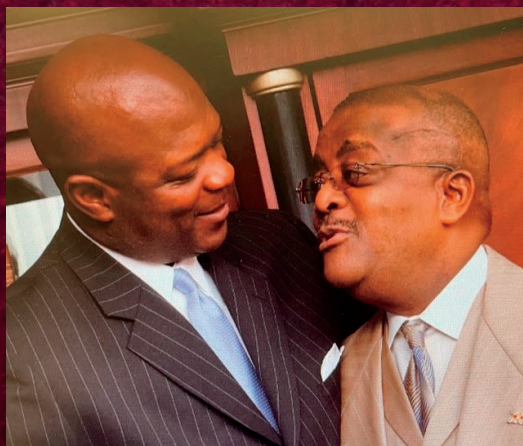
Hezekiah Sistrunk, Jr. is a National Partner and President of The Cochran Firm, founded by legendary trial lawyer Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. He is also Chairman of the National Firm's Board of Partners and Managing Partner of the Firm's Atlanta Office. Mr. Sistrunk's practice focuses largely on litigating complex disputes involving common law; statutory law; contracts; physician and hospital liability; product liability; commercial, corporate and business issues; catastrophic personal injury and class action/mass torts/pharmaceutical litigation. To date, Mr. Sistrunk has prosecuted and defended hundreds of litigated matters before state courts, federal courts and administrative agencies and has tried over 100 cases to verdict. He also has served as a mediator in hundreds of matters. A graduate of North Carolina State University, with honors, and Duke University Law School, where he was an Elvin R. Latty scholar, Mr. Sistrunk and his trial teams have attained verdicts and settlements on behalf of his clients in excess of \$1Billion.



Mr. Sistrunk's professional attributes are legendary. He is one of The National Trial Lawyers (NTL) "Top 100 Lawyers" (Georgia, 2011-2022), Litigation Counsel of America's Charter Fellows (2007-2022), and Super Lawyers Magazine's Georgia Super Lawyers (2007-2022). He has been inducted into the International Academy of Trial Lawyers (limited to 500 U.S. lawyers who have demonstrated excellence in courtroom advocacy throughout their careers); received National Bar Association's Maynard H. Jackson, Jr. Legacy Award; and is repeatedly peer-selected by The Best Lawyers in America for Personal Injury Litigation-Plaintiffs, Products Liability Litigation-Plaintiffs, and Mass Tort Litigation/Class Action-Plaintiffs. In 2019, The Best Lawyers in America named Mr. Sistrunk "Lawyer of the Year" for Products Liability Litigation-Plaintiffs (Atlanta). This year, he was named "2023 Lawyer of the Year" for Mass Tort Litigation/Class Action-Plaintiffs (Atlanta).

Mr. Sistrunk is Past President, and Executive Committee member, of NTL (the 100 most outstanding Trial Lawyers from each state); was selected for America's Top 100 High Stakes Litigators®; appointed to the National Board of Complex Litigation Lawyers by the National Board of Trial Advocacy; and inducted into The Trial Lawyer Hall of Fame. The professional benefits of these organizations inspired Mr. Sistrunk to co-found The NBL Top 100. In February 2021, Lawyers of Color recognized Mr. Sistrunk as one of the "Ten Most Influential Black Lawyers of the Decade", and in March 2021, Trial Lawyer Magazine and The National Law Journal named him a 2020 member of "America's 50 Most Influential Trial Lawyers."







# ABOUT BENJAMIN F. WILSON

Benjamin F. Wilson hails from Jackson, Mississippi. A graduate of Dartmouth College and Harvard Law School, Ben first worked as an attorney at King & Spalding, focusing on litigation and tax matters. In 1979, he joined the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Division, where he represented the government throughout the country and received multiple Special Achievement Awards for his trial expertise in commercial litigation. Ben then became an associate and partner at Rose, Schmidt, Chapman, Duff, and Hasley. In 1986, he joined Beveridge and Diamond (B&D).

Over the next 35 years, Ben became a national environmental law expert while significantly increasing B&D's attorney diversity and serving multiple terms as firm Chairman. He was lead counsel in numerous complex environmental litigation and regulatory matters for major consumer product corporations, retailers, oil and gas companies, municipalities, and developers. He served as Court-Appointed Monitor for the Duke Energy coal ash spill remediation project (the largest US electric power holding company) and Deputy Monitor for Emissions & Environmental for DOJ in Volkswagen AG's emissions-cheating criminal plea agreement. He served as lead counsel at the largest chromium site in the U.S. and also represented many municipal government agencies on Clean Water Act enforcement, litigation, and project development, including City of New Orleans, DC Water and Sewer Authority, Metropolitan Water District of Greater Chicago, San Antonio Water System, and Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority. He also counseled clients on environmental justice representations.

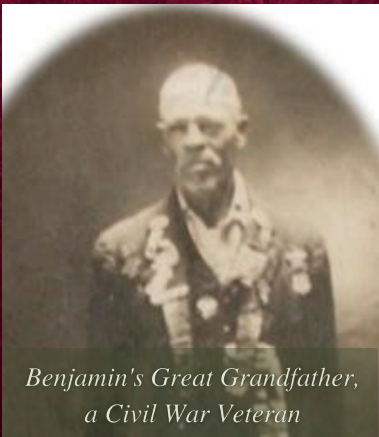


Ben also is a recognized leader on diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. In 2008, he founded Diverse Partners Network and, in 2021, established African American General Counsel and Managing Partner Networks.

He has been lauded for his expertise and leadership by countless organizations and publications, most recently The Environmental Law Institute's (ELI) Environmental Achievement Award (October 2022), The American Lawyer's Lifetime Achievement Award (December 2021) and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (2022).

Ben serves as Chair of ELI, Secretary of Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, and on the Boards of APCO Worldwide, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, PG&E Corporation, DC Bar Foundation, and DC Judicial Nomination Commission. Previously, he also served on the Board of Trustees of Dartmouth College and Chairman of DC Board of Elections and Ethics (1990-2004). For the past 30 years, he has chaired National Bar Association's Environmental, Energy, and Public Utilities Law Section, and for over 17 years, he has taught at Howard University Law School.





*Benjamin's Great Grandfather,  
a Civil War Veteran*



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# INTRODUCING THE 2023 NBL PRESIDENT SANDRA H. ROBINSON

Sandra H. Robinson, an experienced trial attorney with The Cochran Firm, D.C., practices catastrophic medical malpractice and personal injury law. She has settled or won at trial countless multi-million-dollar cases on behalf of victims of malpractice.

Ms. Robinson has actively served in numerous legal organizations. She was President of the Civil Justice Foundation, the first African-American President of the Public Justice Foundation, President of the Women's Bar Association Foundation, President of the Trial Lawyers Association of Metropolitan Washington, D.C. (TLA-DC), and is currently serving again on the Board of Governors of the American Association for Justice (AAJ). She has served as Co-Chair of the National Bar Association's (NBA's) Trial Advocacy Section, Program Coordinator of the National Association of Black Women Attorneys, and a Master in the Charlotte E. Ray American Inn of Court, which promotes the ethical and professional development of lawyers. Ms. Robinson also has taught on the faculty of the National Institute for Trial Advocacy, coached moot court teams in the D.C. Street Law Program, and lectured at high schools, colleges, law schools, and medical schools.



For her legal and community contributions, Ms. Robinson has been heralded locally and nationally. Her many awards include AAJ Women Trial Lawyers Caucus' Marie Lambert Award for leadership and mentoring of women lawyers, Trial Lawyer of the Year by TLA-DC, NBA's Presidential Award, and Greater Washington Area Chapter, Women's Division of NBA's Charlotte E. Ray Award. She has been honored as a "Star of the Bar" by the Women's Bar Association of D.C., featured as a Distinguished Black Woman in the 23rd Annual Scholarship Calendar by Black Women in Sisterhood for Action, was a recipient of the ABA Trial Tort and Insurance Practice Section's Pursuit of Justice Award, and received the Washington Bar Association's Ollie May Cooper Award.

Ms. Robinson is consistently listed in the Best Lawyers in America and as a Washington, D.C. Super Lawyer. She has been honored as one of the Top 50 Women Washington, D.C. Super Lawyers by Law & Politics Magazine, and listed in Lawdragon's 500 Leading Lawyers in America. Most recently, she was awarded the AAJ Leonard M. Ring Champion of Justice Award recognizing her outstanding integrity, character and contributions to the civil justice system.

A native of Virginia, Ms. Robinson graduated from Oberlin College and received her law degree from the Catholic University Columbus School of Law.



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