

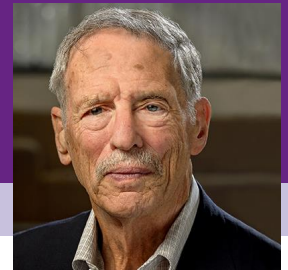
CULTURAL ICONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



The Iconic Impact Initiative by Bridge Philanthropic Consulting, LLC



Civil Rights Attorneys



Introduction by

Anthony Coelho Chairman, Board of Directors, Esquire Bank and former Board Member for the American Association of People with Disabilities

By Tashion Macon, Ph.D., Jennifer Jiles, Sylvia White, and Dwayne Ashley

Introduction

In 1954, Thurgood Marshall changed the American landscape by leading the team in *Brown v. Board of Education* that persuaded the U.S. Supreme Court to rule that school segregation violated the Constitution.

That landmark triumph by the future Supreme Court justice, along with the victories of the Martin Luther King-led civil rights movement in the 1960s, spelled the end of overt discrimination in our nation's laws. But racism merely proved a shapeshifter. It did not go anywhere, instead persisting through means that are less blatant but pernicious all the same, existing in the spaces between the lines of our laws. Most prominently, it lives on in our criminal justice system.

Eric Garner died as he was being arrested for illegally selling cigarettes, saying "I can't breathe" 11 times. Michael Brown was killed in Ferguson, Missouri. Tamir Rice, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Breonna Taylor...

the list grew longer and longer of killings where the police officers involved faced no criminal repercussions. Only on April 20, 2021, did a jury break the pattern by convicting Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin in the murder of George Floyd, who died with a knee on his neck after saying, "I can't breathe" more than 20 times.

This installment of the Iconic Impact Series on the greatest civil rights attorneys honors the men and women who have given generously of themselves both to the cause of civil rights and financially to support fellow African Americans. We have been fortunate to have individuals leading the fight not just for Blacks but also for all men and women, regardless of race or creed. The late Marshall and Johnnie Cochran blazed the trail. Now Sherrilyn Ifill's civil rights work has raised the possibility of her becoming the first Black woman on the Supreme Court, and Vanita Gupta has risen to become the third-ranking Justice Department official. Benjamin Crump and others, meanwhile, have been on the front lines ensuring that justice is served for Floyd, Taylor, and numerous others who have lost their lives to unjust killings.

It is a great privilege to tell you the stories and honor the contributions of the finest civil rights attorneys, both of yesteryear and today. And we hope the day will come when fighting for these rights will no longer be necessary and that they will truly be guaranteed for all.

I wish I could say that racism and prejudice were only distant memories. I wish I could say that this Nation had traveled far along the road to social justice and that liberty and equality were just around the bend. I wish I could say that America has come to appreciate diversity and to see and accept similarity. But as I look around, I see not a Nation of unity but of division — Afro and White, indigenous and immigrant, rich and poor, educated and illiterate.

THURGOOD MARSHALL, 1992

Anthony Coelho
Chairman, Board of Directors, Esquire Bank

Dwayne Ashley,
CEO and Founder, BPC

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court enshrined racism into American law. In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the justices ruled Blacks could be segregated from Whites—whether it was in railway cars, restaurants, public bathrooms, or, most significantly, schools—as long as those facilities were equal.

But as the 1950s arrived, in Clarendon County, South Carolina, White schools received 60 percent of district funding even though three-quarters of the schoolchildren were Black. In Prince Edward County, Virginia, there was one high school for Blacks, and it was crammed to double its capacity, with no cafeteria or gym. In Topeka, Kansas, 7-year-old Linda Brown had to walk past a White school and across railroad tracks to catch a bus to take her to a Black school.

For the previous 20 years, civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall, now chief legal counsel of the NAACP, had made it his mission to end “separate but equal.” Now the time had arrived. Cases involving those three examples of blatant discrimination and two other cases were merged and ready to be argued in *Brown v. Board of Education*. On December 8, 1953, Marshall delivered an opening argument that would reverberate through history.



“The only way that this Court can decide this case in opposition to our position,” Marshall told the justices, “is that there must be some reason which gives the state the right to make a classification that they can make in regard to nothing else in regard to Negroes... (that) the only way to arrive at that decision is to find that for some reason Negroes are inferior to all other human beings... We submit that this Court should make it clear that that is not what our Constitution stands for.”

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court banned school segregation, the first great legal victory for civil rights. This victory solidified Marshall’s reputation as America’s preeminent civil rights attorney, and as his stature grew in 1967 with his swearing-in as the first Black justice on the Supreme Court, it cemented him as the model for others to follow.

Bridge Philanthropic Consulting honors Marshall, Johnnie Cochran, Sherilynn Ifill, and other greats of civil rights law in the latest installment of our Iconic Impact Series. Their generosity of spirit and philanthropy toward their community have made a difference that can only be called extraordinary.



Thurgood Marshall

It is almost as if the term “poetic justice” were invented for Thurgood Marshall. His ascension to the Supreme Court, after winning 29 of 32 cases he argued before it, was just the most famous example of how he turned the tables in the fight for civil rights.

After graduating from Lincoln University, a historically Black university in Pennsylvania, Marshall wanted to study law at the University of Maryland School of Law. However, Maryland did not admit Blacks, so he attended Howard University, another historically Black school, in Washington, D.C., where he graduated first in his class in 1933.

Mentored by prominent Black attorney Charles Hamilton Houston, who would become the NAACP’s first special counsel, the 25-year-old Marshall realized that the stain on the armor of legal segregation was its unequal school admissions process. In 1934, he argued a case involving Donald Murray, who like Marshall had been rejected by University of Maryland, contending the plaintiff should be admitted because there was no “separate but equal facility.” Marshall prevailed in Baltimore City Court, forcing the integration of the very law school that turned him away.

After the victory, Marshall, now head of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), worked with lawyers on a slow, steady assault on segregated schools, culminating finally in *Brown v. Board*.

Marshall was a force at the LDF, which became independent of the NAACP in 1957, overseeing as

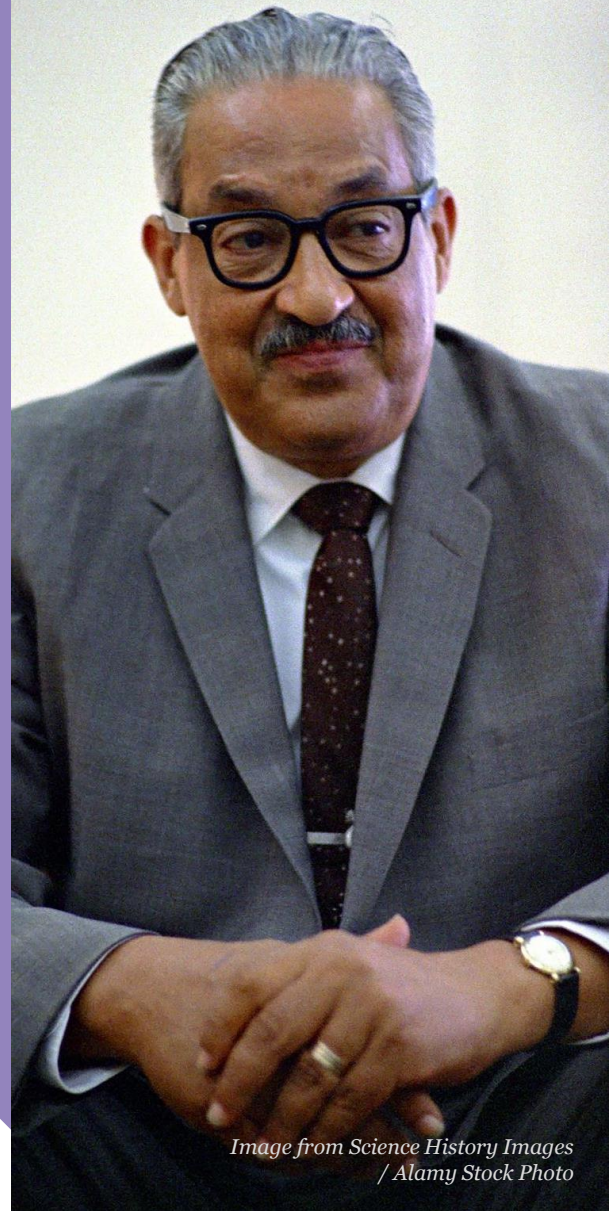


Image from Science History Images / Alamy Stock Photo

many as 450 simultaneous cases, winning victories against a Whites-only primary election in Texas and gaining a Supreme Court ruling that ended restrictive covenants barring Blacks from buying or renting homes.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy nominated Marshall to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and in 1967, President Lyndon Johnson elevated him to the Supreme Court. Marshall, who died in 1993, would continue to be a force for civil rights until his 1991 retirement.

Johnnie Cochran

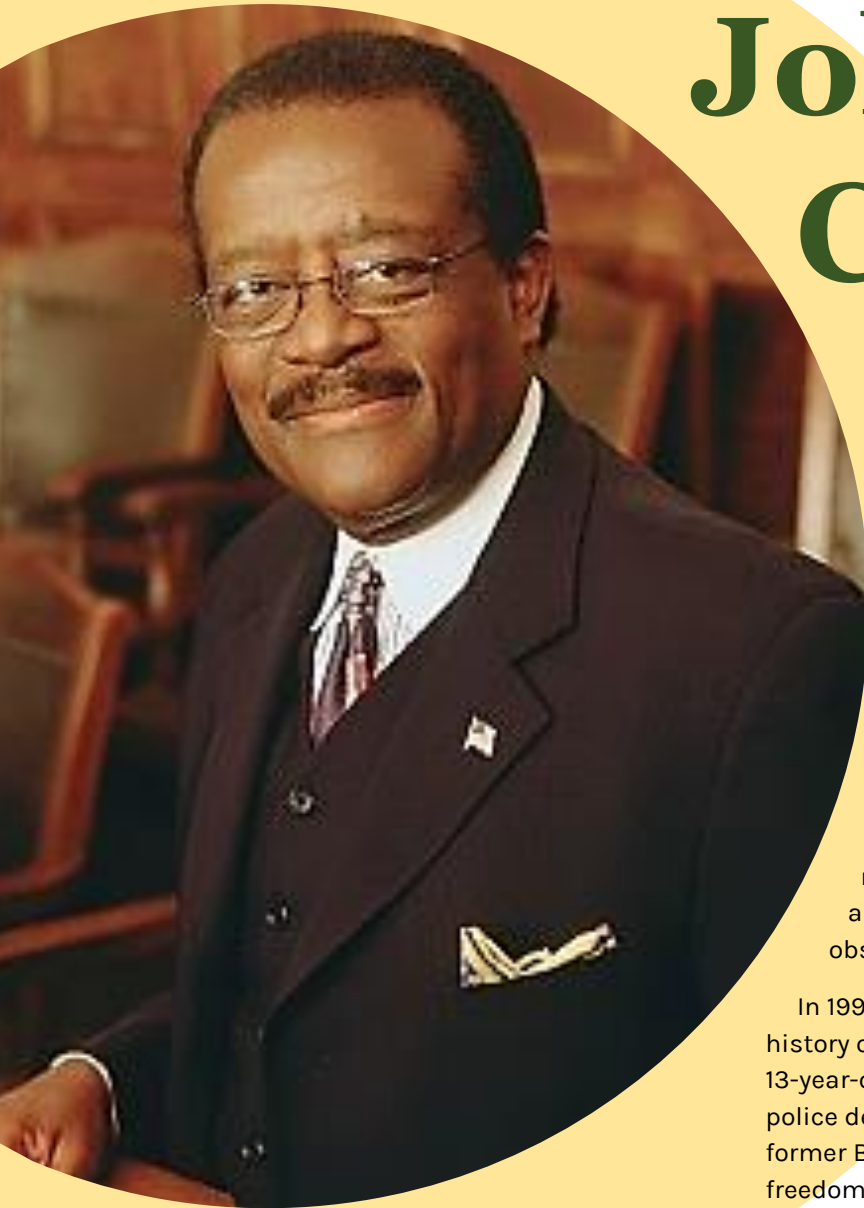


Image from Santarosa Lawyer

Cochran, who died 2005 at age 67, was inspired to civil rights law by Marshall and the *Brown v. Board of Education* victory. The Simpson trial will

be remembered for his pivotal line, “If it doesn’t fit, you must acquit,” reminding jurors that Simpson struggled to get his hand inside the bloody glove found at the scene of the murder of wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman; the case also obscures the rest of a magnificent career.

In 1992, he won the highest jury award in the history of the city of Los Angeles on behalf of a 13-year-old girl molested by a member of the police department. Five years later, he helped former Black Panther Elmer “Geronimo” Pratt win freedom after 27 years for a murder he did not commit. Cochran called it “the happiest day of my life practicing law.”

He also represented Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant who was physically attacked and sexually assaulted by officers of the New York City Police Department after his arrest outside a Brooklyn nightclub.

To Cochran, the Simpson trial was simply another in the continuum of big cases he fought and won. **“The clients I’ve cared about most are the ‘No-Js,’ the ones who nobody knows,”** Cochran said.

Whatever your opinion of the O.J. Simpson verdict, you cannot argue with the assessment of Courtney B. Vance, who played Cochran in the series “The People v. O.J. Simpson,” about what the trailblazing attorney accomplished in the eyes of the African American community as head of the defense team.

“Johnnie Cochran, we see him in the same light as we do Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King because he struck a blow,” Courtney B. Vance, who played Cochran in the series, told NPR. “... Finally, on the biggest stage, a Black man worked the system and got another Black man off.”

A portrait of Sherrilyn Ifill, a Black woman with long, dark, curly hair, wearing a vibrant green dress. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

Sherrilyn Ifill

Sherrilyn Ifill is not just a high-powered civil rights attorney. **Ifill is in the conversation to become the first Black woman named to the U.S. Supreme Court.**

Ifill is the second woman to head the LDF. Last year, *Glamour* magazine named her one of its Women of the Year. Under her leadership, as the magazine described it, “the LDF has defended voting rights, challenged racist policing practices, litigated for equitable education, and fought for fair housing, accessible transportation, and just environmental practices.” She also has partnered with Color of Change, the nation’s largest online racial justice organization.

After a five-year stint as an assistant counsel with LDF, she left in 1993 to join the faculty at the school that rejected Marshall: the University of Maryland School of Law. She pioneered a series of law clinics, including one that focused on fighting against legal barriers to reentry of ex-offenders. In 2007 she published *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the 21st Century*, credited by many for bringing the issue of lynching and reconciliation to the national consciousness. She returned to the LDF in 2013.

“We can always count on Sherrilyn and the Legal Defense Fund to raise issues impacting Black communities,” Rashad Robinson, president of Color of Change, told *Glamour*.

Vanita Gupta

Vanita Gupta was confirmed in recent days as the first woman of color as associate attorney general, joining Attorney General Merrick Garland as the No. 3 Justice Department official.

From 2014-2017, the Indian American served as head of the Civil Rights Division. Appointed by President Barack Obama, she oversaw a wide range of criminal and civil enforcement efforts. Under her leadership, the division pushed for policing and criminal justice reform, including probes of the Ferguson, Baltimore, and Chicago police departments. She also worked to protect the rights of LGBTQ individuals, voting rights for all, and end discrimination in education.

Gupta began her legal career as an attorney at the LDF, where she successfully led the effort to overturn the wrongful drug convictions of 38 individuals in Tulia, Texas, who were ultimately pardoned by then-Governor Rick Perry. Prior to joining the Justice Department, Gupta served as deputy legal director and the director of the Center for Justice at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). She joined the ACLU in 2006 as a staff attorney, where she subsequently secured a landmark settlement on behalf of immigrant children from around the world detained in a privately run prison in Texas that ultimately led to the end of “family detention” at the facility.

Most recently, she served as head of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.



Benjamin Crump

Benjamin Crump is the go-to civil rights lawyer in the United States today. He represents the family of George Floyd, who was murdered by convicted Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin with a knee to the neck, making his mark with civil suits rather than the criminal side of the law.

“We are praying that it is a new precedent that will be set to be able to have all Americans be included when we say with liberty and justice for all,” Crump told NPR after the Chauvin verdict, pointing out that the trial likely played a role in charges being filed in the Daunte Wright case, where a police officer apparently shot Wright, thinking she was using her Taser.

Crump also represents the families of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Jacob Blake in other controversial cases involving the role of police. Crump negotiated a settlement of \$12 million to Taylor’s family.

Crump was at the forefront even before the cultural inflection point of Floyd’s and Taylor’s murders. Crump’s star ascended when he represented the family of Trayvon Martin, who was killed by George Zimmerman in 2012. He then represented the family of Michael Brown in the killing by a police officer in Ferguson. Crump helped Brown’s family win a \$1.5 million settlement from the city of Ferguson, and he helped Trayvon Martin’s family settle, for an undisclosed sum, with the homeowners’ association in the neighborhood where Martin was killed.

Image from NBC News



Lynn Walker Huntley

Lynn Walker Huntley was the kind of woman who regularly achieved firsts for Black women. In 2002, she became the first female president of the Southern Education Foundation, serving until her retirement in 2010. While she was there, she broke ground by directing a study comparing race and inequality in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States. She edited the final report and personally presented it to President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. She also sought a constitutional guarantee of a public education at the state and federal levels.

Huntley, who passed away in 2015, was a force for civil rights dating back to the 1970s. She began her career as a lawyer with the LDF and was part of the legal team handling *Furman v. Georgia*, winning a ruling that temporarily halted the death penalty in America. She went on to work for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division before joining the Ford Foundation in 1982,

eventually heading the nonprofit's Rights and Social Justice Program, helping to fund human rights organizations across the globe.

Her tenure at the Ford Foundation was highlighted by securing financial support for *Eyes on the Prize*, a 14-part documentary about the history of the civil rights movement that aired over two seasons in 1987 and 1990.

"We must continue to struggle against racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, not only because it is the right thing to do, although it is," she once said. **"We must continue to struggle because to give in and give up is to ensure that all is lost and to betray what we stand for."**

Image from
YouTube



Image from
The New York Times

Theodore Wells

Theodore Wells was not even out of college before he started making his mark. He argued the suspension of five Black students in 1969 by the College of the Holy Cross for protesting a recruiting visit to campus by a corporation involved with arms production during the Vietnam War.

Wells is best known for his stellar corporate work, but he has a decades-long relationship with the LDF. **"You have to know who you are,"** Sherilynn Ifill told Law.com. **"For Ted, this is part of his DNA. If you were a Black man coming up and becoming a lawyer, you feel those connections to racial and social justice."**

Wells is the chairman emeritus of the LDF board of directors. He previously served, on a pro bono basis, as general counsel to the New Jersey NAACP and New Jersey co-chairperson of the United Negro College Fund.

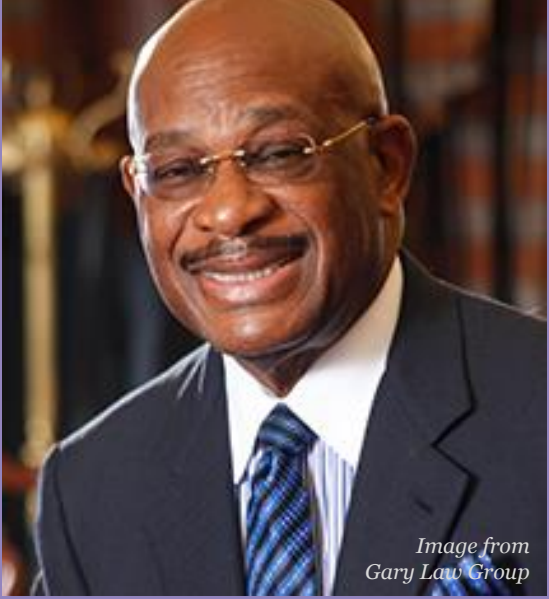


Image from
Gary Law Group

Willie Gary

Willie Gary, honored in 2002 by *Ebony* magazine as one of the “100 Most Influential Black Americans,” is best known as “The Giant Killer” for triumphing in cases against some of America’s biggest corporate giants, with winnings valued at more than \$30 billion.

Few can match his philanthropic actions, either. In 1994, he and wife Gloria formed the Gary Foundation, which provides scholarships and other resources to Black youth, enabling them to achieve a higher education. He also pledged \$10.1 million to his alma mater Shaw University in 1991 and has donated millions of dollars to dozens of historically Black universities. He is also active in the NAACP and the National Urban League.

Gary was involved in a high-profile action in 2003 with Johnnie Cochran and other leading attorneys, suing the state of Oklahoma and city of Tulsa on behalf of some 200 survivors and descendants of the 1921 Tulsa race riot. The courts, however, dismissed the case, saying the defendants had no legal standing and that they personally were not the ones traumatized.

Michael Meltsner, born in 1937, served as first assistant counsel to the LDF and served as counsel in many of the leading Supreme Court civil rights cases of the 1960s.

In one of those cases, a hospital was forced to admit two African American board-certified doctors after they had been denied staff privileges on the grounds of being “unqualified.” **His lawsuits led to the integration of hundreds of Southern hospitals, serving as a model for what became Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.**

The Yale Law graduate served as the second White lawyer on the LDF staff, working under Thurgood Marshall. He went on to represent Muhammad Ali in the case that removed legal barriers barring his return to boxing after he refused induction into the Army based on his religious beliefs.

Michael Meltsner

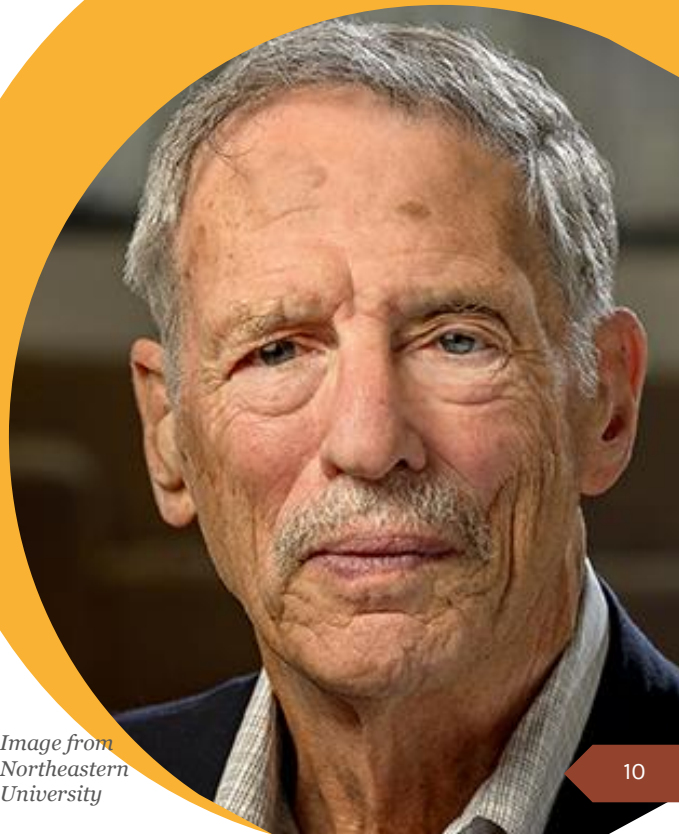


Image from
Northeastern
University



Image from
Jane Scherr/NYT

Donald A. Jelinek

Donald A. Jelinek quit a Wall Street firm to defend civil rights workers in the South, and then represented inmates accused in the Attica prison rebellion and Native Americans who seized Alcatraz Island to dramatize their belief that the island rightly belonged to them.

In 1965, Jelinek jumped into the civil rights fray by volunteering for the ACLU, representing workers from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the Jim Crow South. The final wish of Jelinek, who died in 2016, was for his gravestone to read "He was SNCC."

Jelinek worked on strategy with Martin Luther King and was twice arrested for practicing law in Alabama without a license. **He defended 61 inmates charged with a total of 1,400 felonies in the Attica riot in New York. No inmate served any additional time for their crimes, which began as a protest against poor living conditions and lack of political rights.**

L. Chris Stewart

L. Chris Stewart is a go-to attorney in civil rights cases where Black men have been killed by police. He was famously involved in a case where Atlanta man, Walter Scott, was slain. He hadn't planned to stay long, but he wound up there for two months. **Stewart was among those at the beginning of the wave who were able to secure victories based on video of a crime captured by bystanders.**

In the Scott case, the video showed North Charleston police officer Michael Slager shooting the victim in the back as he ran away. "This can't be real," Stewart told CNN, remembering his thoughts of when he saw the video. "A police officer wouldn't just unload on somebody like that." Stewart helped secure a \$6.5 million settlement for the Scott family.

Stewart also took on the case of Botham Jean, a man killed by an off-duty police officer who said she mistakenly entered his apartment.

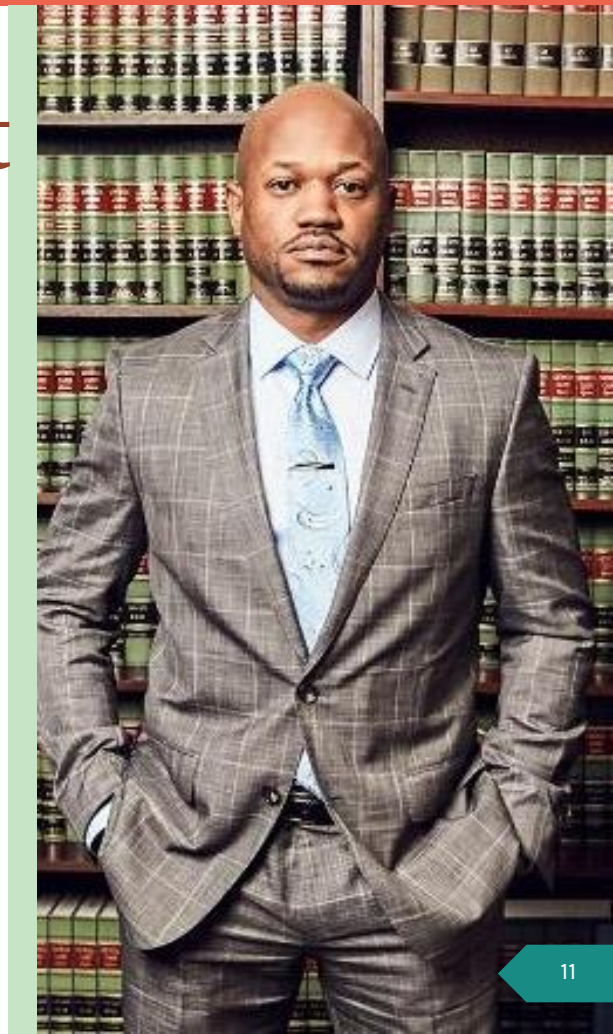


Image from CNN

Leading 'Go To'

Civil Rights Attorneys



Raymond C. Pierce

is president and CEO of the Southern Education Foundation, where he leads efforts to advance educational opportunities for African American and low-income students in the Southern states. Previously, he was the dean of the School of Law at North Carolina Central University. He served as deputy assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights during the Clinton administration, after having worked as a private civil rights attorney in Little Rock, Arkansas, on issues of racial discrimination and education funding inequities.

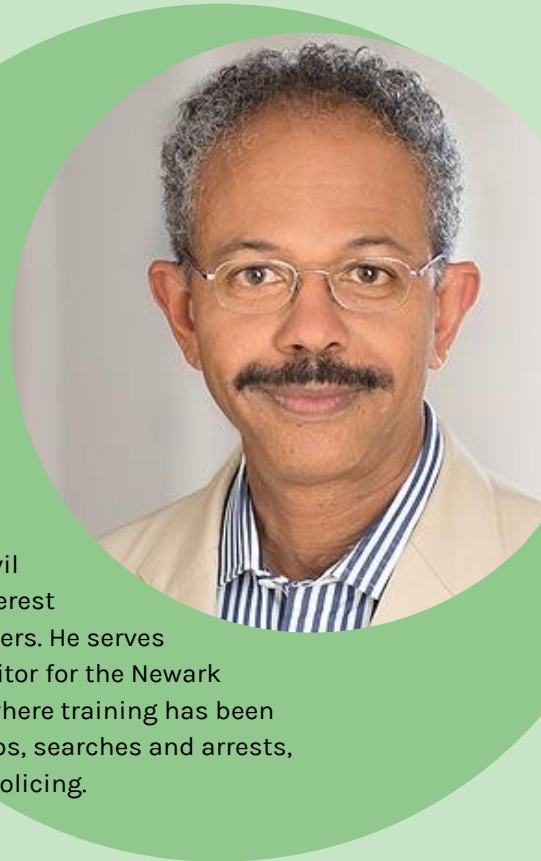


S. Lee Merritt

helped bring attention to the murder of Jordan Edwards, a 15-year-old shot and killed by a suburban Dallas police officer while riding with friends in a car leaving a house party.

Peter Harvey

was the first African American to serve as New Jersey attorney general, holding office from 2003-2006. He now is a partner in the New York law firm of Patterson Belknap, where he works with various clients on civil rights and public interest legal and policy matters. He serves as independent monitor for the Newark Police Department, where training has been implemented on stops, searches and arrests, as well as bias-free policing.



Andrew M. Stroth

Andrew M. Stroth is a civil rights attorney and managing partner of the Chicago-based Action Injury Law Group, a legal team devoted to protecting communities of color and ending police brutality in America. Before establishing the Action Injury Law Group, Andrew represented many high-profile NBA, NFL, and MLB professional athletes negotiating over \$125 million in sponsorship deals and employment contracts for Dwyane Wade, Donovan McNabb, Michael Vick, Brandon Marshall, Lovie Smith, Cheryl Scott, Robin Robinson, and many others.

The work of the Action Injury Law Group focuses on filing federal lawsuits on behalf of victims involved in police shootings and injuries. To supplement their legal work, Andrew created the 'Truth, Hope, and Justice Initiative' to mobilize and support mothers from across the country who have lost loved ones to police violence. The key focuses of the initiative are police reform through advocating for social justice and racial equality as it relates to new legislation; legal education via digital resources to mothers pursuing legal action; and a digital memorial, which shares the stories of mothers and families struggling to find hope after the loss of their loved ones.



Ted Shaw

was director-counsel and president of the LDF from 2004-2008. He was lead counsel in a coalition that represented Black and Latino students in the University of Michigan affirmative action admissions case, prevailing in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Michele K. Rayner-Goolsby

represents the family of Markeis McGlockton, an unarmed Florida black man killed during an altercation over a parking space. A sheriff's officer said initially he would not arrest Michael Drejka, the White man who shot him, citing the state's "stand your ground" law.



Authors

Anthony Coelho *Chairman, Board of Directors, Esquire Bank*

Tony Coelho has been a member of the Board of Directors since 2010 and was appointed Vice Chairman in early 2018. In addition to Esquire, Mr. Coelho has served as Chair of the Advisory Board for Bender Consulting Services since 2002 and was Chair and a Board Member for the American Association of People with Disabilities and the Lead Independent Director of Service Corporation International. Mr. Coelho was a prominent member of the U.S. House of

Representatives from 1978 – 1989. As a member of the House of Representatives, Mr. Coelho authored the Americans with Disabilities Act, widely recognized as one of the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in the last 40 years. Mr. Coelho's former and current business affiliations include service on a number of corporate boards and as CEO of Wertheim Schroder Investment Services.

Dwayne Ashley *Founder and Chief Executive Officer*

Dwayne Ashley is renowned for his bold, strategic thinking and wise counsel in philanthropy. He is a successful entrepreneur in the course of his career, he raised more than \$800 million. A fearless and authentic solicitor, he is committed to social justice and helping organizations of color maximize their fundraising success. He advises non-profit, philanthropists and influencers globally.

A powerhouse of energy and a passion for fundraising, Dwayne has managed capital and annual campaigns and spearheaded development for such notable organizations as the Jazz at Lincoln Center, Success for Kids, 100 Black Men of America, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the United Negro College

Fund, and the United Way of Texas Gulf Coast, among many others.

Dwayne is a thought-leader in the field and he has shared valuable concepts in numerous articles and in four books. They include *Eight Steps to Raising Money: Measuring Your Fundraising Impact*, *Word for Word Publishing: 8 Winning Steps to Creating a Successful Special Event* with Carol Campbell, Director of Events at Prairie View A&M University; *I'll Find A Way or Make One: A Tribute to HBCUs* with noted journalist Juan Williams and *Dream Internships: It's Not Who You Know, But What You Know!* He is an alumnus of Wiley College and the University of Pennsylvania Fels School of Government.

Sylvia White *Chief Operations Officer*

Sylvia White is the Chief Operations Officer at Bridge Philanthropic Consulting and a seasoned executive with experience managing teams in every development area, including major gifts, corporate and foundation relations, annual giving, stewardship, systems, and research. With significant experience in principal and major gifts, Sylvia has worked with top-level donors to secure millions of dollars in pledges to various organizations and businesses championing change. In addition to her professional accolades, Sylvia has published articles in the New York University College

of Dentistry's Global Health Nexus, *The Positive Community Magazine* and is a proud member of, The Harlem Writers Guild, the oldest operating Black Writers Workshop in the United States. A recipient of many awards for civic and community service, she has also served as a volunteer for The Harlem Arts Alliance, The Hope Center, The Harlem Renaissance Five Mile Race, Volunteers in Service to America, Literacy Volunteers, and Prison Fellowship, and the NAACP Mid-Manhattan Branch.

Authors

Tashion Macon, Ph.D *Partner, Culturalist*

With almost twenty years of exceptional achievements in both the for-purpose and for-profit realms, Tashion Macon is widely known as a leading marcom and traditional/ transmedia expert with an unwavering emphasis on results. A true visionary, Tashion sees changes and trends in the market before anyone else, frequently finding extraordinary and lucrative opportunities by innately recognizing what can be different and better. After she predicts the future, she gets in front of it. A gifted and highly respected culturalist and strategist, she regularly originates marketing and communications strategies that dramatically influence new consumer realms. She helps pace-setting marketing initiatives that generate multi-million-dollar profits and successfully managed

and navigated \$400MM media budgets to drive double digit percentage boosts in ROI. With a rare meteoric mind and transformational ability to galvanize like-minded people, she collaborates with corporate and client leaders to mobilize cross-functional teams. She is regularly sought out as a subject matter expert in pop culture, global social enterprise, philanthropy, politics/ policies and impact programming and crafts important conversations that become part of the social lexicon.

Tashion holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology and a Master of Business Administration in Strategic Marketing. She has a number of professional affiliations and associations.

Jennifer Jiles *Partner, Professor*

Jennifer Jiles is an award-winning strategic communicator, writer, magazine editor, producer, and college educator. She has held managerial or senior level positions across private industry, nonprofit organizations, higher education, and arts and entertainment. Her areas of expertise include strategic planning, campaigns, editorial, media, crises, and change management. Over the years, Jennifer has also built an appreciable track record in fundraising communications strategies. Most recently, she was

a member of the Global IT vice president's leadership team for Dell SecureWorks, a leading cyber intelligence company. Jennifer led the global corporate communication function for the company. She has worked with more than 25 organizations, including AT&T, UPS, Walmart, BET, and Jazz at Lincoln Center. Jennifer has been faculty at Georgia State University since 1999. She is holds membership in the Technology Association of Georgia and the Public Relations Society of America.



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