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FOREWORD

By ROBERT PICKETT*

THE NINETEEN SEVENTIES will be a crucial decade in nurturing a cadre of Black liberators within the legal system. In a society valuing those legal traditions reinforcing the white majority's tyranny, Black lawyers, despite massive barriers, have been a cutting edge slashing at racism's jugular. Without a doubt, they have played a crucial role in lifting from their people's shoulders the burdens imposed by a racist society.

Because of racism, Blacks have learned to regard the law with mistrust and skepticism. Was it not this society which clung so long and so fast to the despotic ideal of "separate but equal?" Is it not this same society which seems bent on reviving that ill-begotten rationale under the duplicitous banner of "anti-busing?" Was it not this society which rationalized its most repressive practices in the name of the "LAW?" Is it not this society which, even now, calls for "law and order" to stifle the voices of protest rising from the ranks of the oppressed?

But despite these manifest reasons for distrusting the legal system, Blacks can ill afford the luxury of dismissing the law as irrelevant. Problems do exist; they must be recognized and solved. Despite our limited numbers, our nascent organization, our limited financial resources, and the odds, Black lawyers will solve them. We gladly assume David's mantle against this callous Goliath.

OVER THE YEARS, Black lawyers have waged a lonely battle against racist oppression. They have, as a class, been placed at the bottom of their profession by their white compeers. Within their own communities they have fought suspicion and mistrust. Their problems have been large, the rewards small, and the task seemingly unending. Undoubtedly the past decades of victory, anguish, and defeat have left their scars.

Now, as we enter the decade of the seventies we must ask: what new legal battles must be fought? We dare not delude our people into believing that the law does now, or will, in the foreseeable future, serve their best interests. White law — that legal system designed by white men to rationalize and sustain the racial hegemony of white corporate capital while circumscribing Black interests by tangentially alluding to us as an afterthought — still stands as a bulwark blocking our path.

While activists build the Black world, Black lawyers must hold the racist beast at bay, defang it, and make our people's life more secure. We can serve Afro-America by meeting the awesome challenge of bending the law to our humane design.

*President, Black American Law Students Association, 1971-72.



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1904 - 1972

Statesman, Scholar, Peacemaker

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