

# **UCLA**

## **National Black Law Journal**

### **Title**

Editorial Board Statement

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/94v306nh>

### **Journal**

National Black Law Journal, 7(1)

### **Author**

NBLJ, Editorial Staff

### **Publication Date**

1981

### **Copyright Information**

Copyright 1981 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

heroic efforts of such stellar lawyers as John Mercer Langston, Charles Hamilton Houston, William Henry Hastie, Thurgood Marshall and Constance Baker Motley, an extraordinary legacy and model has been provided all American lawyers. These great lawyers should be the professional and personal models of excellence, commitment and action by which we measure our own role and everyone else's accomplishments in building, in the words of Martin Luther King, the "road to freedom."

## **ROLES OF THE BLACK LAWYER: A SYMPOSIUM**

### **Editorial Board Statement**

With this issue the *Black Law Journal* returns to a question explored often in its pages: what is and ought to be the role of the black lawyer? That question and its assumptions and implications have recurred for as long as there were black men and women serving as members of the bar and officers of the court.

Despite the possible redundancy and even in view of the likelihood that no definitive answer will emerge, contemporary circumstances require yet another exploration of the role, status obligation and potential of the black lawyer. A less hospitable Supreme Court, a Conservative Congress and a Republican President are only the most visible evidence of changed circumstances.

The nation is undergoing a seemingly radical transformation of its political consciousness. Many of the manifestations of this new consciousness raise serious questions about the survival of programs and policies that contributed to what progress has been made over the past two decades. Within the black community there is a reemergence of the race vs. class debate, with serious scholars asking pointed questions about the motives and methods of the contemporary black leadership many of whom are lawyers. And even within the ranks of the civil rights bar there are those who are voicing profound concern about previously accepted policies and direction.

The ramification and implications of these changes are far-reaching and potentially catastrophic. No less now than a century ago or a half a century ago, how black lawyers respond would affect the course of events and the destiny of black Americans for decades to come. That is why the Board decided to return again to the matter of the black lawyer's role. Cognizant of the primacy of the race vs. class debate the Board invited papers from three young scholars who, in the past, have spoken eloquently to that issue. In addition to Professors Darrity, McDougall and Wilson, the Board solicited the views of a panel of persons currently involved with the making and shaping of public policy and the delivery of legal services. This latter group was asked to respond to the issues raised in a provocative article published eleven years ago by Robert L. Carter, now a judge on the United States

District Court for the Southern District of New York. Judge Carter's article is reprinted in full immediately preceding the comments of our panelists.

The Board hopes that this presentation by drawing upon so varied an assortment of disciplines and perspectives will make a positive contribution to the continuing and essential reappraisal of the role of the black lawyer.

### SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS

(in alphabetical order)

ROBERT L. CARTER is a Federal District Judge for the Southern District of New York. Judge Carter was formerly a lawyer on the staff of the N.A.A.C.P. and a member of the *Brown v. Board of Education* team. He received an A.B. from Lincoln University in 1937, an LL.B. from Howard University in 1940 and an LL.M. from Columbia University in 1941.

CARDISS COLLINS, Congresswoman from the 7th District in Illinois, was Chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus for the 96th Congress. She sits on subcommittees on Energy, Conservation and Power, Fossil and Synthetic Fuels, and Telecommunications, Consumer Protection and Finance. Congresswoman Collins is also Chairwoman of the Manpower and Housing subcommittee and is the immediate past Chairwoman on the select committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control Task Force on Women.

WILLIAM A. DARRITY, JR. is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Texas. He received a B.A. from Brown University in 1974 and a Ph.D. from M.I.T. in 1978. Among his numerous publications are "Illusion of Black Economic Progress," *The Review of Black Political Economy*, winter 1980; "The Boserup Theory Agricultural Group: A Model for Anthropological Economists," *Journal of Development Economics*, June 1980, and "Kalecki, Luxemburg and Imperialism," *Journal of Post Keynesian Economics*, Winter 1979-1980.

VERNON E. JORDAN, JR., is President of the National Urban League. He received a B.A. from DePaul University in 1957, a J.D. from Howard University Law School in 1960 and has been awarded numerous honorary degrees from various educational institutions. He is a member of the Social Security Board of Directors, the Board of Directors of the American Museum, National Urban Commission, and Rockefeller Foundation, among others.

PHILIP M. LORD is Managing Attorney for Community Legal Services, Inc., in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Law Center North Central Office. Lord is former Chairperson of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. He received an A.B. from Brown University in 1970 and a J.D. from Boston University Law School in 1974.

HAROLD A. MCDUGALL, III, is an Associate Professor of Law at the Rutgers University Law School—Newark. He received a B.A. from Harvard College in 1967 and a J.D. from Yale Law School in 1971. He has authored several articles, including "Black Landowners Beware: A Proposal for Statutory Reform," 9 *New York University Review of Law and Social Change* (1979-1980), "The Judicial Struggle Against Exclusionary Zoning: The New Jersey Paradigm," 14 *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* (1979), Note; "The Case for Black Juries," 79 *Yale Law Journal* (1970).

PATRICIA L. SMITH, Supervising Attorney for Community Legal Serv-

ices, Inc., in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is in charge of the Housing and Economic Development Unit at the North Central office in Philadelphia. Former chairperson of the Philadelphia chapter of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, Smith received a B.A. from Mount Holyoke College in 1973 and a J.D. from George Washington University National Law Center in 1977.

GILBERT WARE, an Associate Professor of Political Science at Drexel University, received a B.A. from Morgan State University in 1955. He received both an M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1962. Ware edited *From the Black Bar: Voices for Equal Justice*. Oxford University Press will publish his forthcoming biography of Judge William H. Hastie.

WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON is the Lucy Flower Professor of Urban Sociology and chairman of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Power, Racism, and Privilege, The Declining Significance of Race*, and coeditor of *Through Different Eyes: Black and White Perspectives on American Race Relations*. Wilson received a B.A. from Wilberforce University in 1958 and Ph.D. from Washington State University in 1966.

## THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RACE: REFLECTIONS ON *THE DECLINING SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE\**

William Julius Wilson

### I. INTRODUCTION

*The Declining Significance of Race*<sup>1</sup> has generated discussions of race and class in the black American experience that have come in three overlapping waves. The first wave, emerging immediately following publication, included both emotional diatribes largely by people who were annoyed with the title, and discussions by columnists and other political commentators most of whom failed to grasp the significance of the macro-structural arguments raised in the book. The second wave included more thoughtful commentary, but the discussion was limited to testing my arguments with census statistics covering the last ten or fifteen years and to various *ad hoc* arguments, devoid of any structural basis, about the changing or inclining instead of the declining significance of race. The third and current wave includes discussions that have moved beyond the emotional *ad hominem* level, beyond the narrow discussion of census figures and debates about race

---

\* Revision of a paper for the Minority Section of the Association of the American Law Schools (AALS), Phoenix, Arizona, January 1980.

1. W. WILSON, *THE DECLINING SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE: BLACKS AND CHANGING AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS* (1978).