

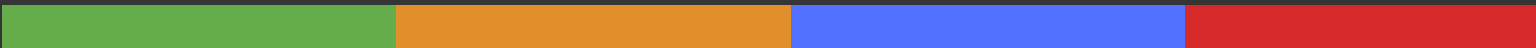


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# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

CELEBRATING LEADERS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

2023



Black leaders in the legal profession have bettered the lives of North Carolinians through their dedication to equitable legal representation, their commitment to equal justice, and their passion for serving the people of North Carolina. The following is a collection of professionals carefully selected for their years of experience, their career-long achievements and the legacy they leave for generations to come. The North Carolina African American Heritage Commission joins Governor Roy Cooper and his team in recognizing these outstanding honorees. They have made substantial and groundbreaking contributions to the legal landscape in North Carolina. We celebrate them with great expectations for the future.

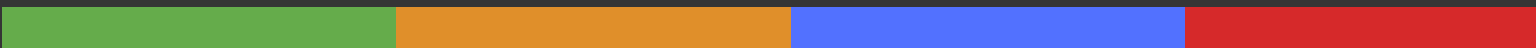


The North Carolina

African American

Heritage

Commission



# Governor Cooper Proclaims February as Black History Month



## State of North Carolina

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

2023

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

A PROCLAMATION

**WHEREAS**, Black History Month reminds us of our responsibility to honor the contributions and achievements of African Americans and their pivotal role in shaping our state and nation; and

**WHEREAS**, North Carolina is home to the largest number of four-year, degree-granting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the nation; our HBCUs have a rich heritage steeped in activism, service, and innovation dating back to the foundation of Shaw University in 1865; Shaw University established a law department on December 11, 1888, with John Sinclair Leary of Fayetteville serving as its first professor and dean; and

**WHEREAS**, founded in 1935, North Carolina Central University's School of Law today stands as the pre-eminent educator of black lawyers in North Carolina; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to its traditional task of training lawyers to meet the needs of the underrepresented in this state, the NCCU law school has trained many black lawyers who have served in a variety of capacities; graduates include Maynard Jackson, former mayor of Atlanta; Samuel Chess, the first Black special superior court judge in North Carolina; Clifton Johnson, the first Black chief district court judge and the first Black resident superior court judge in the state; Leroy Johnson, the first Black state legislator in the South in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; John Wheeler and Joseph Sansom, Jr., both of whom served as president of Mechanics and Farmers Bank, the largest Black-controlled bank in the South; H.M. Michaux, Jr., the first Black person in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to serve as a U.S. attorney in the South; and Paul Jones, former assistant clerk, U.S. Supreme Court, and the first Black member of the clerk's staff; and

**WHEREAS**, African Americans have long played a vital role in advancing the legal field in our state, including trailblazing African American women with a strong connection to North Carolina, such as Pauli Murray, lawyer and civil rights activist raised in Durham, and Cheri Beasley, the first African American woman to serve as Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, and a longtime resident of Cumberland County; and

**WHEREAS**, North Carolina cultivates a commitment to equal opportunity regardless of race with contributions from countless African American judges, attorneys, and legal professionals; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of North Carolina has designated February 2023 as Black History Month to recognize and celebrate the many African American leaders and innovators and their contributions; this year we focus on those who are known for their contributions and accomplishments in law, justice, and the legal field, advancing our state and beyond;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, ROY COOPER, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim February, 2023, as "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" in North Carolina, and commend its observance to all citizens.



  
Roy Cooper  
Governor

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this first day of February in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-three and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-seventh.

Governor Roy Cooper has proclaimed February as Black History Month to honor the contributions of Black North Carolinians and celebrate our state's rich African American culture and history.

VIEW

The image features two horizontal bars, one above and one below the text. Each bar is composed of four colored segments: green, orange, blue, and red, arranged from left to right. The bars are solid and have a consistent width.

**HONOREES**

# HON. A. LEON STANBACK JR.

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Judge A. Leon Stanback, Jr. has served North Carolina as a prosecutor, parole commissioner, private practitioner, and Superior Court Judge. Stanback began his career as an associate attorney with Frye & Johnson Attorneys in 1968. He became an Assistant District Attorney (ADA) for Guilford County the following year. Following his service as an ADA, Stanback was a partner in Lee, High, Taylor, Dansby, & Stanback and Dansby & Stanback Attorneys. He led the firm Stanback & Stanback, P.A. beginning in 1980. In 1989, Stanback was appointed to the North Carolina Superior Court for the 14th Judicial District serving Durham County. Stanback left the bench in 2009 and served as District Attorney for Durham County from 2009-2014. Stanback then went into private practice, establishing Attorney A. Leon Stanback, Jr. & Associates. Stanback has served on the Governor's Minority Executive Advisory Council, as Commissioner of the North Carolina Parole Commission, and the North Carolina Board of Law Examiners. He is a member of the North Carolina Bar Association, the National Bar Association Judicial Council, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Judge Stanback earned a Bachelor of Science from NC Central University (1965) and a JD from the NC Central University School of Law (1968).



Durham, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://law.nccu.edu/law-school-names-legal-clinic-conference-room-in-honor-of-judge-a-leon-stanback-jr/>

# HON. ALLYSON K DUNCAN

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Hon. Allyson K. Duncan was the first African American woman appointed to the Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals and the North Carolina Court of Appeals. She served on the 4th Circuit from 2003 to 2019. While on the 4th Circuit, Judge Duncan was appointed by Chief Justice John Roberts first as a member and later as Chair of the International Judicial Relations Committee. She presently serves as Vice President and Regional President of the International Association of Judges. She was elected President of the Federal Judges Association and served on its governing board.

Prior to her appointment to the bench, Judge Duncan was a partner in the law firm Kilpatrick Stockton, a top-tier law firm headquartered in Atlanta. She came to private practice from a North Carolina Utilities Commission term. Her labor and employment expertise derived from serving with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as an appellate attorney arguing Title VII and, ultimately, as the agency's Legal Counsel.

Judge Duncan has served on several Committees of the North Carolina Bar Association and was elected its first African American President in 2003. She serves on the Duke University Board of Trustees and was a founding member of the Carolina Ballet.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.regent.edu/faculty/j-d-judge-allyson-k-duncan-ret/>

Celebrating Leaders in the Legal Profession

# HON. ANITA SUE EARLS

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Anita Sue Earls has served as an Associate Justice on the North Carolina Supreme Court since 2019. She began her legal career in the firm of Ferguson, Stein, Watt, Wallas, Adkins & Gresham in Charlotte. In 1998, Earls was appointed by President Clinton to serve as Deputy Assistant General in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. She directed the Voting Rights Project at the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law from 2000-2003, then joined Julius Chambers at the UNC Center for Civil Rights as Director of Advocacy in 2003.

In 2007 Justice Earls founded the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, a non-profit legal advocacy organization, and served as its Executive Director for ten years.

Justice Earls is a member of the North Carolina Bar Association, North Carolina Advocates for Justice, North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers, North Carolina Association of Women Attorneys, the American Constitution Society, and the NAACP. In addition, the National NAACP, the North Carolina Justice Center, and Equality North Carolina have recognized her. Justice Earls earned a BA in Political Economy (with honors) from Williams College (1981) and a JD from Yale School of Law. She was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Social Science Research Institute, Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Social Sciences at Duke University from 2009-2012.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.nccourts.gov/judicial-directory/anita-earls>

# BELINDA J. FOSTER

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Belinda J. Foster is the first African American woman elected as district attorney in Rockingham County and North Carolina. She was first appointed to this position by Governor Jim Hunt in 1993 and was subsequently elected to the position. Before serving in this role, Foster worked as an assistant prosecutor in Rockingham and Caswell counties and for the law firm Michaux and Michaux in Durham.

Foster is a former President of the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys. She received an undergraduate political science and history degree from Bennett College and earned a JD from UNC Chapel Hill. She is also a graduate of the National College of District Attorneys at the University of Houston. Foster currently serves as an assistant district attorney in Forsyth County.



Yanceyville, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=320469690120046&set=a.223981813102168>



# HON. CARL R. FOX

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Carl R. Fox is a retired Senior Resident Superior Court Judge. He began his career in 1978 as an Assistant District Attorney in Chatham and Orange counties. He remained in this position until 1984, when he became the first African American district attorney in North Carolina. He remained in this position for two decades.

Gov. Mike Easley appointed Fox as Superior Court Judge for Judicial District 15B (Chatham and Orange counties) in 2005. He was the first African American judge appointed in this district. He served on the bench until his retirement in 2020. In retirement, Fox has continued (alongside his wife, Julie) to promote donor registration and raise money for research to help cure blood cancers through “Save the Fox,” an organization they founded following Judge Fox’s diagnosis with myelodysplastic syndrome in 2015.

Fox earned a BA in English from UNC Chapel Hill and a JD from the UNC School of Law.



Mount Olive, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/carl-fox-8b429a4;>  
<https://chapelboro.com/news/local-government/longtime-chatham-orange-county-superior-court-judge-carl-fox-to-retire;>  
<https://www.chathamnewsrecord.com/stories/long-time-judge-carl-fox-set-to-retire-oct-1,6467>

# HON. CHARLES L. BECTON

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Charles L. Becton, born in Morehead City and raised in Ayden, has served as a private practice lawyer, judge, university chancellor, and university professor. He began his career in 1969 with the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, then went into private practice with Chambers, Stein, Ferguson, & Lanning in Charlotte. He helped establish the firm's Chapel Hill office, remaining at that practice until he was appointed to the NC Court of Appeals in 1981. He remained on the bench until 1990, then returned to private practice with Fuller, Becton, Slifkin, & Bell in Raleigh.

Becton's most prominent cases as an attorney were the Wilmington Ten case and the Brockman death penalty case.

Becton was named the interim chancellor at North Carolina Central University in 2012 and subsequently served as the interim chancellor at Elizabeth City State University. He has taught at the UNC School of Law, Duke University School of Law, and North Carolina Central University School of Law.

Becton has served as president of the NC Academy of Trial Lawyers, the NC Association of Black Lawyers, and the NC Bar Association. The NC Academy of Trial Lawyers' Trial Advocacy Award is named in his honor. He earned an undergraduate degree at Howard University, a JD from Duke University, and an LL.M. from the University of Virginia.



Morehead City, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://oralhistoriesproject.law.unc.edu/oral-histories/charles-becton/>;  
<https://www.elon.edu/u/news/2013/09/18/charles-l-becton-receives-leadership-in-the-law-award/>;  
<https://www.jbhe.com/2013/05/charles-becton-to-lead-elizabeth-city-state-university/>;  
<https://www.jbhe.com/2012/08/charles-becton-to-lead-north-carolina-central-university/>

Celebrating Leaders in the Legal Profession

# HON. CHERI LYNN BEASLEY

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Cheri Beasley is the first African American woman in the North Carolina Supreme Court's 200-year history to serve as Chief Justice. She served on the state's highest Court from 2012 - 2022 and was named Chief Justice in March 2019. As Chief Justice, Beasley implemented paid family leave for over 6,000 court employees and created the first human trafficking court in North Carolina.

Justice Beasley served four years as an Associate Judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals and was a District Court Judge for a decade in the 12th Judicial District in Cumberland County. With her election to the Court of Appeals, Beasley became the first African American woman elected to a statewide office in North Carolina without first being appointed by a governor. Before beginning her judicial career in 1999, Beasley was a public defender in Cumberland County.

A graduate of The University of Tennessee College of Law and Douglass College of Rutgers University, Beasley earned a Master of Laws (L.L.M.) in Judicial Studies from Duke University School of Law. She has held several leadership roles in the American Bar Association and the North Carolina Bar Association and has received several awards for her leadership and public service.



Raleigh, NC

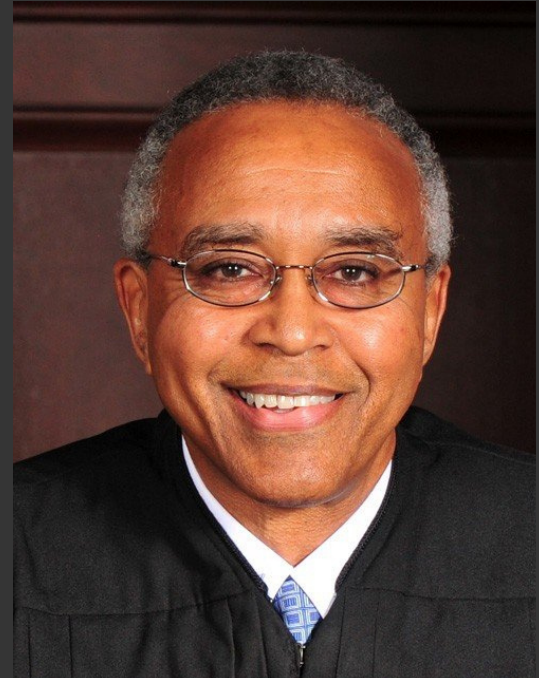
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[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/youth\\_lawyers/leadership/fellows/cheri-beasley/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/youth_lawyers/leadership/fellows/cheri-beasley/);  
<https://cheribeasley.com/meet-cheri-beasley/>;  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/cheri-beasley-a60b663>

# HON. CRESSIE H. THIGPEN JR.

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Cressie H. Thigpen is a lawyer and jurist who served on the NC Court of Appeals. Raised in Guilford, Hoke, and Cumberland counties, Thigpen spent the first 35 years of his career as a trial attorney in Raleigh. He was appointed to the North Carolina Court of Appeals by Beverly Perdue in 2010 and again in 2011. He served until 2012.

Thigpen has served as the Chairman of the North Carolina Central University Board of Trustees and as a member of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Board of Trustees. Thigpen earned an undergraduate degree from North Carolina Central University and a JD from Rutgers University.



Raleigh, NC

Compiled from:  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Cressie\\_Thigpen](https://ballotpedia.org/Cressie_Thigpen);  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20101014164911/http://judgecressiethigpen.com/>; <https://www.ednc.org/11-28-2022-heres-who-will-lead-gov-coopers-study-of-public-university-governance/>

# DAN T. BLUE JR.

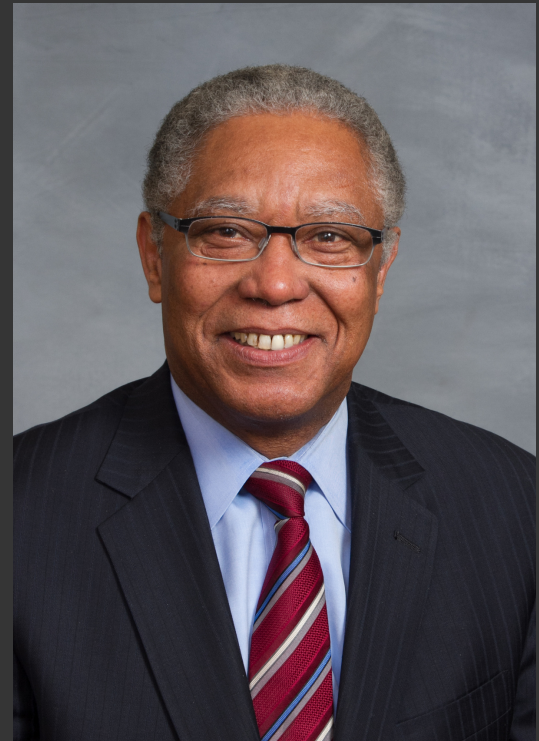
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Sen. Dan T. Blue, Jr. is a lawyer and politician in Raleigh. Blue began his legal career with Sanford, Cannon, Adams & McCullough, becoming one of the first African Americans to integrate the state's major law firms. He and several associates established their own practice in 1976. Today, he serves as managing partner of that firm, Blue, Stephens, and Fellers (formerly Thigpen, Blue, Stephens & Fellers), in Raleigh.

First elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives in 1980, Sen. Blue has represented the people of North Carolina for over four decades. In 2002, he left the Legislature to run for the United States Senate. He returned to the House in 2006 and moved to the Senate in 2009. Blue served as the first African American Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives (1991-1994).

Blue served three terms as President of the National Conference of State Legislatures (the organization's first African American president) and served on the executive committee of the Southern Legislative Conference. He holds nine honorary degrees and is past Chairman of the Duke University Board of Trustees.

Sen. Blue attended North Carolina Central University, where he earned a degree in Mathematics in 1970 and graduated from the Duke University School of Law in 1973.



Lumberton, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://danblueforsenate.org/about/>;  
<https://www.ncleg.gov/Members/Biography/S/268>;  
[https://ncchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/BlueDan\\_GA21.pdf](https://ncchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/BlueDan_GA21.pdf);  
<https://oralhistoriesproject.law.unc.edu/oral-histories/hon-daniel-t-blue-jr/>

# MAYOR ELAINE M. O'NEAL

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Elaine M. O'Neal is an attorney, jurist, and the current Mayor of Durham. O'Neal was a judge for 24 years and was the first woman in Durham County to be named Chief District Court Judge. She became the first woman elected to serve as Superior Court Judge in Durham County in 2011. O'Neal retired from the bench in 2018 to accept a position as Interim Dean for the North Carolina Central University School of Law. As a jurist, O'Neal is known for pioneering advocacy around same-sex adoptions and the rights of LGBTQ families.

O'Neal has served as Chair of the Superintendent's Code of Student Conduct Task Force for Durham Public Schools, where she worked to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. She has also served as Chair of the Racial Equity Task Force for the City of Durham. She is a member of the Durham County Bar Association, George White Bar Association, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

O'Neal earned a BS in Math from North Carolina Central University and a JD from the North Carolina Central University School of Law.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:

[https://www.durhamnc.gov/1329/About-the-](https://www.durhamnc.gov/1329/About-the-Mayor#:~:text=Elected%20November%202021%2C%20Term%20Expires,Carolina%20Central%20University%20Law%20School;)

[Mayor#:~:text=Elected%20November%202021%2C%20Term%20Expires,Carolina%20Central%20University%20Law%20School.;](https://www.durhamnc.gov/1329/About-the-Mayor#:~:text=Elected%20November%202021%2C%20Term%20Expires,Carolina%20Central%20University%20Law%20School;)

[https://elaineoneal.com/about-elaine-oneal/;](https://elaineoneal.com/about-elaine-oneal/)

[https://ballotpedia.org/Elaine\\_O%27Neal](https://ballotpedia.org/Elaine_O%27Neal)

Celebrating Leaders in the Legal Profession

# HON. G.K. BUTTERFIELD

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G. K. Butterfield is a former member of Congress, having represented North Carolina's first district for more than 18 years. He is a senior advisor on McGuireWoods Consulting's federal public affairs team.

As a member of Congress, Butterfield served on the influential Committee on Energy & Commerce and as Senior Chief Deputy Whip. In 2014, Butterfield was unanimously elected Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus for the 114th Congress. In addition, Butterfield helped recruit qualified African Americans for nomination to the federal bench. He also helped lead the effort to pass legislation to update the formula contained in Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and passed House legislation to recognize the Lumbee Indian Tribe of North Carolina.

Before his election to Congress, Butterfield engaged in the private practice of law in Wilson, North Carolina, with Fitch, Butterfield & Wynn. In 1988, Butterfield was elected Resident Superior Court Judge presiding over civil and criminal courts in 46 counties of North Carolina. In 2001, Governor Michael Easley appointed Judge Butterfield as Associate Justice on the North Carolina Supreme Court. He served on the court for two years. Governor Easley then appointed Butterfield as Special Superior Court judge.

Butterfield graduated from North Carolina Central University with a degree in Political Science and Sociology. He then graduated from the NCCU School of Law in 1974.



Wilson, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.mcguirewoods.com/people/b/g-k-butterfield>

# GWYNN T. SWINSON

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Gwynn T. Swinson is an attorney, administrator, and educator.

Swinson joined the staff of former NC Governor Mike Easley in 1993. She served as a special deputy attorney general for Administration for the Department of Justice before being appointed Secretary for the Department of Administration in 2001. She remained in that position until 2006. Prior to joining Gov. Easley's staff, Swinson worked for the US Department of Justice as Assistant Branch Director for the Commercial Litigation Branch of the Civil Division for five years. She also served as Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs at Duke University School of Law.

Following her time as Secretary of the Department of Administration, Swinson was Vice President for Government / Community Relations and External Affairs with Duke University Health System from 2006-2008 and was of-counsel with Forrest Firm, Inc. from 2020-2021.

Swinson co-founded the NC Governor's Conference for Women in 2005. She served on the UNCG Board of Trustees from 2006-2011.

Swinson holds a BA in Political Science from Antioch College, a JD from Antioch College School of Law, and an LLM from Duke University School of Law. She has taught at Kyoto Comparative Law Center (Kyoto, Japan), UNC-Chapel Hill, and North Carolina Central University.



Belhaven, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/gwynn-swinson-68340640/>;  
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p16062coll5/id/568/>;  
<https://www.asheville.com/news/goveasleycabinet.html>;  
<https://bennettbrc.com/member/gwynn-swinson/>;



# HON. HENRICK E. "HENRY" FRYE

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Hon. Henry E. Frye is a pioneering attorney, jurist, and politician. Frye served in the United States Air Force in the 1950s, attaining the rank of Captain, but was denied the right to register to vote using a so-called "literacy test." This experience led him to pursue a career in the legal field.

Frye became the first Black person to enter the UNC School of Law as a first-year student in 1959. After earning a JD, he became one of the first two African Americans to be admitted to the North Carolina State Bar. In 1963 he became the first Black assistant United States District Attorney.

In 1968, Frye won a seat in the North Carolina General Assembly. He was the first African American person to serve in the Assembly since the Reconstruction era. He served in the House of Representatives from 1969 - 1980 and in the Senate from 1980 - 1983. Frye successfully struck the use of literacy tests from the North Carolina State Constitution during his time in the General Assembly.

Governor Jim Hunt appointed Frye as an Associate Justice on the North Carolina Supreme Court in 1983. Frye was the first African American to hold this position. He went on to become the first African American Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court in 1999.

Frye joined Brooks Pierce, a prominent law firm in Greensboro, in 2000. He retired in 2016.



Ellerbe, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/henry-frye>; <https://www.judges.org/news-and-info/judicial-heroes-legends-march-2021-chief-justice-henry-e-frye/>; [https://greensboro.com/henry-frye-and-n-c-bar-association-mark-a-milestone/article\\_39e4b2b4-583e-11e7-93dc-fbb575aba3e9.html](https://greensboro.com/henry-frye-and-n-c-bar-association-mark-a-milestone/article_39e4b2b4-583e-11e7-93dc-fbb575aba3e9.html)

# HON. HENRY MCKINLEY "MICKEY" MICHAUX JR.

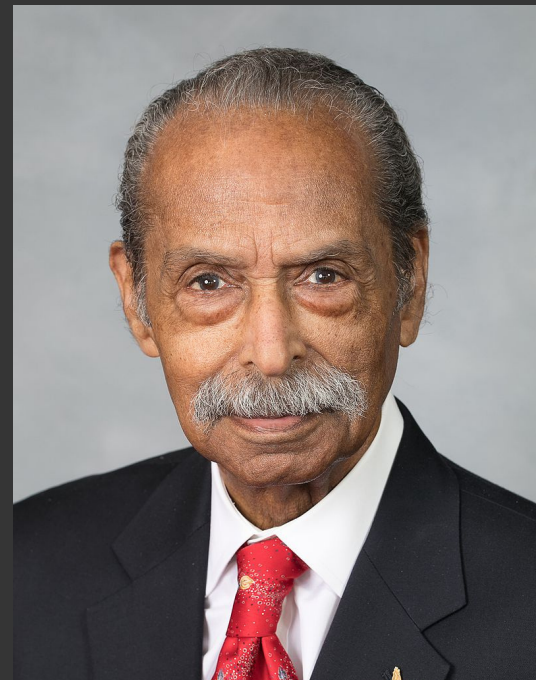
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H. M. "Mickey" Michaux, Jr. is a prominent political figure and a pioneer in the legal profession. He is known for his participation in the civil rights movement and work related to voting rights, civil rights, affordable housing, and election law.

Michaux joined the NC General Assembly as a state House representative in 1972. He was the first African American to represent Durham County in the NC General Assembly.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed Michaux as United States Attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina. He was the first African American to serve in this position in the South since Reconstruction. He left this appointment at the end of the Carter administration and rejoined the House of Representatives in 1983, serving until his retirement in 2019. He was appointed to a vacant seat in the Senate in 2020, which he held for three months before returning to retirement. He was the longest-serving North Carolina General Assembly member at his retirement.

Michaux earned a degree in Biology from North Carolina Central University in 1952. After stints in the United States Army Medical Corps and the Army Reserves, Michaux earned a JD from North Carolina College at Durham (now North Carolina Central University) in 1964. He was the fourth African American admitted to the North Carolina Bar Association.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.ncbar.gov/news-publications/news-notices/2022/09/michaux-receives-distinguished-service-award/>

# PROF. IRVING L. JOYNER

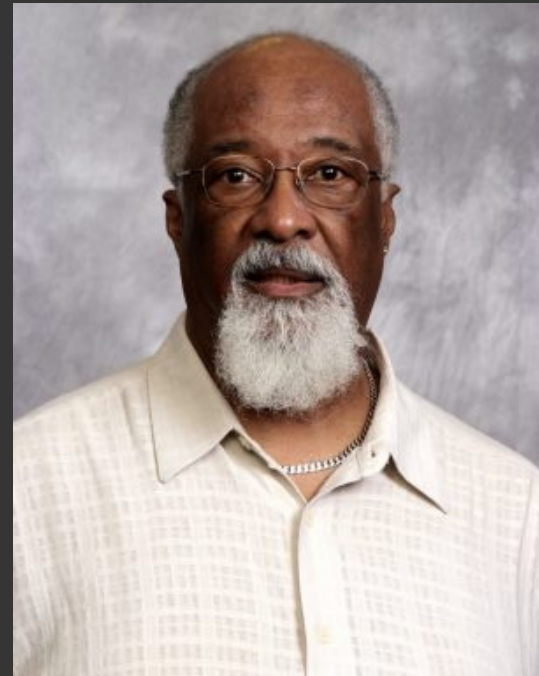
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Professor Irving L. Joyner is a renowned professor of law and trial lawyer. He is noted for his extensive record of pro bono legal service.

Joyner, known for his civil and voting rights work, became involved in the Civil Rights Movement as a high school student. As he came of age and deepened his involvement in the movement, he learned that many civil rights organizations had difficulty obtaining legal representation, inspiring him to pursue a legal career. He is well known for his work (alongside honoree James E. Ferguson II), seeking justice for the Wilmington 10 for nearly forty years, resulting in their exonerations and pardons in 2012. He is also known for defending “Moral Monday” protesters, for which he was awarded the 2014 NAACP Humanitarian of the Year Award.

Joyner has taught at the North Carolina Central University School of Law since 1982 and served as the school’s associate dean from 1984-1992. He was named the school’s Professor of the Year in 2006. In addition, he has authored three editions of the book *Criminal Procedure in North Carolina*.

Joyner served as vice chair of the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission. He has been named Lawyer of the Year by the George H. White Bar Association and the North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers. In addition, he was the 2019 recipient of the NAACP’s William Robert Ming Advocacy Award.



LaGrange, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://law.nccu.edu/school-of-law-directory/irving-joyner/>;  
<https://law.nccu.edu/school-of-law-directory/irving-joyner/>;  
<https://www.ncbar.org/news/three-legal-legends-of-color-honored/>;  
[https://issuu.com/edwardbrown4/docs/nccu\\_web\\_hr/s/10149678](https://issuu.com/edwardbrown4/docs/nccu_web_hr/s/10149678)

# HON. J. "J.C. CARLTON COLE

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J. Carlton "J.C." Cole is an attorney and jurist in Perquimans County. Prior to entering law school, Cole worked as a federal agent in New York City. Cole began his legal career as a private practice attorney in Perquimans County. He was active in politics even while in private practice and served as Chairman of the 1st Congressional District Democratic Party.

Cole was first appointed to the bench in 1994, as a district court judge. He was appointed to serve out the term left vacant by his wife (and fellow honoree) Janice McKenzie Cole. He was later elected to the seat. Governor Beverly Perdue appointed Cole to serve as a Superior Court judge in the 1st Judicial District in 2009. Cole served as a judge for nearly three decades, retiring from the bench in 2021.

Dedicated to community and professional service, Cole served as President of the NC Superior Court Judges and as President of the First Judicial District Bar. He has also served on the Chief Justice's Professionalism Committee and the Governor's Crime Commission.

Cole earned an undergraduate degree from Livingstone College, a graduate degree in criminal justice from the North Carolina Central University School of Law, and a JD, also from North Carolina Central University School of Law. He is a certified mediator with Delphi Dispute Resolution.



Hertford, NC

Compiled from:  
[https://ballotpedia.org/J.\\_Carlton\\_Cole](https://ballotpedia.org/J._Carlton_Cole);  
<https://delphiresolutions.com/our-team/jim-gale/>;  
<https://www.thecharlottepost.com/news/2018/02/02/local-state/district-judge-carlton-cole-keynotes-livingstone-founder-s-day/>;  
[https://www.pilotonline.com/news/article\\_e643ba2b-2287-5367-8d27-83378bec8b81.html](https://www.pilotonline.com/news/article_e643ba2b-2287-5367-8d27-83378bec8b81.html)

# HON. JAMES ANDREW WYNN JR.

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The Honorable James Andrew Wynn, Jr. is a U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit judge. He was appointed by President Obama in 2009 and confirmed by the Senate in 2010. In the 20 years before his federal judicial career, he served as a judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals and briefly as a justice on the Supreme Court of North Carolina.

He began his legal career as a military lawyer in the U.S. Navy JAG Corps, where he served for 30 years (four years active and 26 years reserve). For six of those years, he served as a military trial judge. In 2009, he retired at the rank of Navy captain.

Following his active-duty service, he practiced law as a litigator at Fitch, Butterfield & Wynn in Wilson and Greenville.

Among his many service positions, Wynn chairs the American Bar Association's Center for Human Rights and sits by the appointment of Chief Justice Roberts on the Information Technology Committee for the U.S. Judicial Conference.

Wynn holds a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a juris doctor from the Marquette University Law School, and a Master of Laws degree in judicial process from the University of Virginia School of Law.



Robersonville, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.marquette.edu/leadership/trustee-wynn.php>

# JAMES D. "BUTCH" WILLIAMS

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James D. "Butch" Williams, Jr. established his law practice, The Law Offices of James D. Williams, Jr., P.A., in 1996. His primary practice areas are criminal law, both State and Federal, as well as sports law and entertainment law.

Before entering private practice, Williams served in the USMC as an infantry officer and judge advocate. He was discharged from the USMC as a captain in 1983, wherein he returned to Durham and joined mentor Kenneth B. Spaulding in the practice of law. Since establishing his firm, Williams has become known for his work on the Duke Lacrosse case, Michael Vick's criminal case, Joe Brewer's corruption case, and the Wesley Snipes tax case. Williams has distinguished himself as a sports agent and lecturer in sports law. Most notably, he has represented 10 top draft picks in both the NFL and the NBA. Overall, he has represented 10 Pro Bowl players.

Williams has been an adjunct professor of law at North Carolina Central University School of Law where he has taught Trial Practice and Sports Law for over 25 years.

Williams holds a BA in Political Science from North Carolina Central University and a JD from the North Carolina Central University School of Law.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://jamesdwilliamslaw.com/about-us/about-me/>

# JAMES E. FERGUSON II

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James E. “Fergie” Ferguson II is a founding partner of the firm Ferguson, Stein, Chambers, Gresham, and Sumter, P.A. and has served as President of the firm since 1984. The firm was the first in North Carolina to be integrated.

Ferguson became involved in the Civil Rights Movement as a teenager. He participated in sit-ins and other desegregation efforts as an undergraduate student at North Carolina Central University. He then obtained a JD from Columbia University.

Ferguson was the prosecuting attorney in the prominent criminal case documented in the book *Blood Done, Sign My Name*. He is also known for his work (alongside honoree Irving L. Joyner), seeking justice for the Wilmington 10 for nearly forty years, resulting in their exonerations and pardons in 2012.

Ferguson has achieved distinction as a teacher of trial skills. He is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, having been inducted in 1987. Ferguson co-founded South Africa's first Trial Advocacy Program during the country's apartheid era.

In the civil arena, Ferguson has served as the Chair of the Charlotte Community Building Initiative and as a member of the North Carolina Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration. In addition, he served for more than 15 years as General Counsel and member of the National Executive Committee of the American Civil Liberties Union.



Asheville, NC

Compiled from:  
<http://www.fergusonsumter.com/jjames-e-ferguson> with additional information from  
<https://www.meckbar.org/?pg=james-e-ferguson-ii-recipient-of-the-2017-ayscue-p#:~:text=He%20received%20his%20JD%20from,the%20first%20in%20the%20South.>

# HON. JANICE MCKENZIE COLE

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Janice McKenzie Cole is an attorney, jurist, and current Town Manager for the Town of Hertford. Before moving to Hertford, Cole was a New York City police officer and was one of the first female police officers assigned to patrol high-crime areas of the city. After law school, she became an assistant United States attorney in the Eastern District of New York.

Cole moved to Hertford in 1983 and went into private practice there. She was elected District Court Judge for the 1st Judicial District in 1990 and was the first African American and first woman to serve as a judge in the district. Cole remained on the bench until 1994 when she was named the US Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina by President Bill Clinton. As a US Attorney, Cole expanded the US Department of Justice's Weed and Seed program to five additional communities.

Cole has also served as Chairwoman of the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners and was selected as a member of the US Electoral College by the NC Democratic Party in 2008.

Cole holds a BS and MPA from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, and a JD from Fordham University.



Hertford, NC

Compiled from:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janice\\_Cole](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janice_Cole);  
[https://www.dailyadvance.com/news/local/hertford-council-taps-cole-for-interim-manager-role/article\\_231fe67c-d009-5647-9f5e-e86fc31ce15d.html](https://www.dailyadvance.com/news/local/hertford-council-taps-cole-for-interim-manager-role/article_231fe67c-d009-5647-9f5e-e86fc31ce15d.html)



# HON. JOSEPH "JOE" WILLIAMS

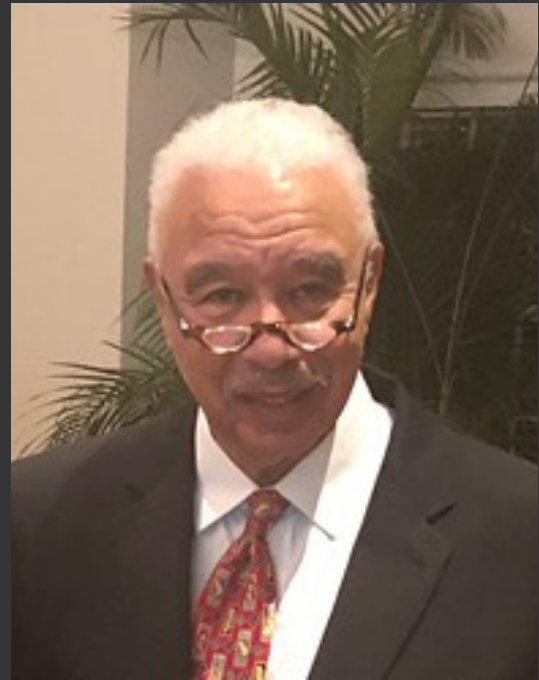
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Joseph A. Williams is a respected attorney, jurist, and mentor. Williams grew up in Greensboro, NC and Jakarta, Indonesia. He became involved in the civil rights movement as a high school student in Greensboro and completed his undergraduate education at NC A&T University.

Williams clerked for fellow honoree Henry Frye's law firm early in his career. He was hired as an assistant district attorney in Guilford County in 1975 and was appointed to the bench in Guilford County, as a district court judge, in 1977. Williams served as a judge from 1977-1980. He adopted fellow honoree Judge Elreta Alexander-Ralston's "Judgement Day" program in his courtroom, which dismissed cases against juveniles who agreed to perform duties dictated by the court. These types of diversion programs can be found throughout the country today but were controversial in the late 1970s.

Williams became a partner of the firm Lee, Johnson & Williams in 1980 and started his own firm in 1983. He became the first African American President of the Greensboro Bar Association in 2002.

Williams has served on the NC A&T University Board of Trustees, on the Board of Directors for NCCJ (North Carolina for Community and Justice), and on the Board of Directors for Greensboro National Bank. He is a Member of the American Bar Association, Greensboro Bar Association, Greensboro Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Greensboro Young Men's Club, and NC Guardsmen, Inc



Greensboro, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.greensborobar.org/frontpage-article/williams-receives-distinguished-service-award/>;  
[http://libresearch.uncg.edu/unsung\\_heroes/participants/jWilliams.html](http://libresearch.uncg.edu/unsung_heroes/participants/jWilliams.html);  
[https://greensboro.com/local-attorney-joe-williams-will-be-the-first-black-man-to-serve-over-the-greensboro/article\\_783c0b61-d934-573b-9c5f-47c885b82d7b.htm](https://greensboro.com/local-attorney-joe-williams-will-be-the-first-black-man-to-serve-over-the-greensboro/article_783c0b61-d934-573b-9c5f-47c885b82d7b.htm)

# HON. KAREN BETHEA-SHIELDS

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The Honorable Karen Bethea-Shields was the first woman elected to the bench in Durham County. She served as a District Court Judge in Durham County from 1980-1985 before returning to private practice in 1986.

Bethea-Shields was one of the first three Black women to graduate from Duke University School of Law. She was named co-counsel in the prominent Joan Little case immediately following the passage of the bar (1974); the case brought national attention to prisoner's rights, women's rights, and racial and sexual discrimination in the criminal justice system. Joan Little claimed that she was not guilty of murder because she was defending herself against sexual assault; she is thought to be the first woman in the United States to be acquitted of murder based on these grounds.

Bethea-Shields was named Lawyer of the Year by the National Conference of Black Lawyers in 1976 and was named a Legal Legend of Color by the North Carolina Bar Association in 2021. She holds a BA in Psychology from East Carolina University and a JD from Duke University School of Law.



Method, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.ncbar.org/nc-lawyer/2021-08/2021-legal-legends-of-color-karen-bethea-shields-durham/>;  
[http://andjusticeforall.dconc.gov/gallery\\_images/karen-bethea-shields-first-female-judge-in-durham-county-1980-1986/](http://andjusticeforall.dconc.gov/gallery_images/karen-bethea-shields-first-female-judge-in-durham-county-1980-1986/);  
<https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/bethea-shields/>;  
<https://ncbarblog.com/mip-2021-legal-legends-of-color-award-honorees/>;  
[https://prabook.com/web/karen\\_louise.bethea-shields/914098](https://prabook.com/web/karen_louise.bethea-shields/914098)

# HON. LORETTA COPELAND BIGGS

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The Honorable Loretta Copeland Biggs is a United States District Court judge for the Middle District of North Carolina. She has served in this position since 2014 and is the first African American woman to serve on a federal district court in North Carolina.

Biggs began her career as a staff attorney for the Coca-Cola Company. She moved to public sector law in 1984, first as an assistant district attorney and then as a district court judge in Forsyth County. In 1994, Biggs joined the United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of North Carolina. She worked as an executive assistant for the US Attorney from 1997-2001. In 2001 she was appointed to the North Carolina Court of Appeals by Governor Jim Hunt.

Biggs was a private practice attorney from 2002-2014 with the firm Davis, Harwell, & Biggs. She was briefly with the firm Allman, Spry, Davis, Leggett, & Crumpler just before her appointment to the federal bench.

Biggs has served as the NC Chapter Secretary for the Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and was Master of the Joseph Branch Inn of Court, Wake Forest University School of Law, from 1996-1998. In addition, she has served on the Winston-Salem State University Board of Trustees and the Salem College and Wake Forest University Boards of Visitors.

Biggs holds a BA from Spelman College and a JD from Howard University School of Law.



Winston-Salem, NC

Compiled from:  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Loretta\\_Copeland\\_Biggs](https://ballotpedia.org/Loretta_Copeland_Biggs);  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loretta\\_Copeland\\_Biggs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loretta_Copeland_Biggs);  
<https://www.fjc.gov/node/1394721>

# LORETTA E. LYNCH

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The Honorable Loretta Lynch was the first African American woman to serve as the United States Attorney General. She was appointed to the position by President Barack Obama.

Lynch began her career as a private practice attorney in the mid-1980s. She was named an Assistant United States Attorney in the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York in 1990. She quickly moved up the ranks and was promoted to Deputy Chief of the General Crimes Section, Chief of the Long Island Division, and Chief Assistant for the Eastern District before being named the US Attorney for the district in 1999 by President Bill Clinton.

Lynch returned to private practice in 2002. She performed pro-bono work for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda during this time. She was appointed as the US Attorney for the Eastern District of New York for a second time, by President Barack Obama, in 2010.

After serving as Attorney General from 2015-2017, Lynch became a partner with Paul Weiss in New York. She advises clients on complex government and internal investigations and high-stakes litigation matters, including those that implicate significant regulatory enforcement issues, that involve substantial reputational concerns, and that are international in scope. She also chairs the firm's Civil Rights and Racial Equity Audits practice.

Former Attorney General Lynch holds an AB in American Literature and a JD from Harvard University.



Greensboro, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.justice.gov/ag/bio/attorney-general-loretta-e-lynch>;  
<https://www.paulweiss.com/professionals/partners-and-counsel/loretta-e-lynch>;  
<https://www.sifma.org/people/loretta-e-lynch/>

# MELVIN "MEL LUTHER WATT

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Melvin Luther “Mel” Watt is an attorney and politician from Charlotte. He was a private practice attorney in Charlotte from 1970-1992, specializing in business and economic development.

Watt served in the North Carolina Senate from 1985-1986 and was the campaign manager for Harvey Gantt’s Mayoral campaign in the 1980s. He represented North Carolina’s 12th District in the US House of Representatives from 1993-2014. He served as the Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus from 2005-2006.

Watt was nominated for Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency by President Barack Obama in 2013. He was confirmed in 2013 and served in the position from 2014-2019. The Federal Housing Financing Agency provides oversight for the FHA, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac.

Watt holds a BS in Business Administration from UNC-Chapel Hill and a JD from Yale University.



Charlotte, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://history.house.gov/People/Detail/23463>;  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mel\\_Watt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mel_Watt);  
<https://www.fhfa.gov/AboutUs/Documents/Melvin-L-Watt-bio.pdf>;  
<https://www.cmstory.org/exhibits/meklenburg-people/melvin-watt>

# MICHAEL "MIKE" RIVERS MORGAN

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Justice Michael Rivers Morgan is an Associate North Carolina Supreme Court Justice. He has served in this position since 2017.

Morgan served on the legal staff of the NC Department of Justice for ten years following law school, first as a research assistant, then as an Associate Attorney General, and later as an Assistant Attorney General. In 1989, he was appointed as an Administrative Law Judge with the North Carolina Office of Administrative Hearings. While in this capacity, he administered the oath of office to his father, the first and only African American to serve as mayor of the City of New Bern. In 1994, Morgan was appointed as a Wake County District Court Judge by Governor Hunt, and he was subsequently elected to the judgeship in 1996 and again in 2000. He was elected to the Superior Court bench in 2004 for an eight-year term and was re-elected to the post in 2012. In his first statewide quest for elective office, Morgan was elected in November 2016 to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina.

Morgan holds a BA in History and Sociology from Duke University and a JD from the North Carolina Central University School of Law, where he served as the student body president during his final year of law school.



Cherry Point, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.nccourts.gov/judicial-directory/michael-morgan>

# HON. MILTON TOBY FITCH

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Milton Toby Fitch began his career in 1975 as a private practice attorney in his hometown of Wilson, where he established a law firm (Fitch, Butterfield, and Sumner) with his childhood friend G.K. Butterfield. Fitch and Butterfield participated in local protests and pickets as high school students.

Fitch continued serving his community as a North Carolina House of Representatives member from 1985-2001. He was appointed Senior Resident Superior Court Judge for the 7BC Judicial District of the First Division of Superior Court (Wilson and Edgecombe counties) by Governor Mike Easley in 2001. He retired from the bench in 2018 and returned to the North Carolina General Assembly, this time as a Senator representing District 4. He left this office in 2023.

Fitch was named Most Worshipful Grand Master of Prince Hall Masons of North Carolina in 2003. He holds a BS in Political Science and a JD from North Carolina Central University. He was the Defensive Coordinator and Defensive Line Coach for North Carolina Central University's football team from 1969-1972



Wilson, NC

Compiled from:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toby\\_Fitch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toby_Fitch);  
<https://nccueaglepride.com/honors/alex-m-rivera-athletics-hall-of-fame/milton-toby-fitch/46>;  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Milton\\_F.\\_Fitch,\\_Jr.](https://ballotpedia.org/Milton_F._Fitch,_Jr.);  
Richard Stradling, "Divided They Stand," *The Sunday News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), December 7, 2003, 1A; Joe Dew, "Tar Heel of the Week: Rep. Fitch may not be flashy but in House, he's a rising star," *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), August 2, 1992, C1 and C2.

# HON. ORLANDO F. HUDSON JR.

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Orlando F. Hudson, Jr. is a retired judge who served on the bench for four decades. Hudson, who grew up in High Point, became interested in the law after spending summers working for civil rights lawyer Sammy Chess, Jr. After earning undergraduate and law degrees from UNC School of Law, Hudson returned to Chess's firm as an attorney. Hudson moved to Fayetteville in 1980 to serve as an assistant public defender, then to Durham in 1983 to serve as an assistant district attorney.

Hudson was first appointed to the bench as a district court judge in Durham County in 1984. He then served as a judge for Judicial District 14A of the North Carolina 1st Superior Court, an office he held from 1989 until his retirement at the end of 2022.

Hudson adjudicated several high-profile murder cases and presided over the Michael Peterson murder trial in 2003. Early in his judicial career, Hudson found that the NC Division of Youth Services was in violation of state law for failing to provide treatment for youth sex offenders. The Division designed a treatment program in response to this ruling. As a jurist, Hudson was known for his commitment to fairness in the courtroom.

Hudson was awarded the 2016 Outstanding Trial Judge award by North Carolina Advocates for Justice.



High Point, NC

Compiled from:  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Orlando F. Hudson, Jr](https://ballotpedia.org/Orlando_F._Hudson,_Jr)  
;  
<https://attorneyatlawmagazine.com/stories/judicial-interview/judge-orlando-f-hudson-jr>;  
<https://www.nccourts.gov/news/tag/general-news/judge-orlando-hudson-named-ncaj-2016-outstanding-trial-judge>;  
[http://andjusticeforall.dconc.gov/gallery\\_images/orlando-f-hudson-district-and-superior-court-judge-1984-present-2/](http://andjusticeforall.dconc.gov/gallery_images/orlando-f-hudson-district-and-superior-court-judge-1984-present-2/); "Hudson Earned Recognition as Public Defender," Focus on Black North Carolinians (supplement), *The Herald-Sun* (Durham, NC), February 2, 1988, p. 5; <https://www.wral.com/orlando-hudson-durham-s-staircase-judge-retiring/20648083/>

Celebrating Leaders in the Legal Profession



# HON. PATRICIA A. TIMMONS-GOODSON

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President Obama appointed the Honorable Patricia Timmons-Goodson to the United States Commission on Civil Rights in 2014. She currently serves as Vice-Chair of the Commission.

Timmons-Goodson was an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court of North Carolina from 2006 to 2012. She served as an Associate Judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals from 1997 to 2005 and as a District Court Judge of the Twelfth Judicial District of North Carolina from 1984 to 1997. She was the first Black woman to serve as a judge in Cumberland County, the first to be elected to any state appellate court, and the first to serve on North Carolina's highest court.

Timmons-Goodson began her career as a United States Census Bureau District Manager. She then served as an assistant prosecutor and continued as a legal services lawyer in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Timmons-Goodson is an active American Bar Association member, serving on the Editorial Board of the ABA Journal and the ABA Law School Accreditation Committee. In addition, she serves on the Guilford College Board of Trustees, The Fayetteville Chapter of Links, Incorporated, and the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Civil War Center. Timmons-Goodson received her B.A. and J.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an L.L.M. from Duke University Law School.



Fayetteville, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.usccr.gov/about/patricia-timmons-goodson> with additional information compiled from  
<https://facultygov.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/261/2011/08/2010HDTimmons-Goodson.pdf> and  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Patricia\\_Timmons-Goodson](https://ballotpedia.org/Patricia_Timmons-Goodson)

# R. STEVE BOWDEN

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R. Steve Bowden is a personal injury attorney in Greensboro. His firm, R. Steve Bowden & Associates, has locations in Greensboro and Burlington. Bowden's practice areas include serious personal injury, automobile wrecks, and nursing home abuse.

Bowden has received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, a Campbell University Distinguished Alumni, and an Alumnus of the Year by Wake Forest University Black Alumni. He is a member of the American Trial Lawyers Association and is a former member of the Board of Governors of the NC Academy of Trial Lawyers. In addition, he is a former member of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors and the NC A&T University Board of Trustees. He is currently a member of the Advisory Board for the Elon University School of Law.

Bowden earned a BA from Wake Forest University and a JD from Campbell University Adrian Wiggins School of Law. He is a member of Delta Theta Phi, Sigma Pi Phi, and Omega Psi Phi. He was admitted to the North Carolina Bar in 1979



Greensboro, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.rstevebowden.com/attorney/r-s-bowden/>;  
<https://www.elon.edu/u/law/about/advisory-board/>

# REGINALD L. WATKINS

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Reginald L. Watkins is an attorney from Raleigh. He served as an attorney for the US Army for three years before joining the NC Attorney General's office in 1979.

Watkins quickly worked his way up the ranks at the Attorney General's office. He was named special deputy attorney general in 1988. In this position he administered the Human Resources Section. Two years later, in 1990, Watkins was named senior deputy attorney general by NC Attorney General Lacy H. Thornburg. At the time of his appointment he was the highest ranking African American in the history of the state department of justice.

Watkins left the practice of law in January 2022. He earned a JD from UNC School of Law.



Raleigh, NC

Compiled from:  
"Under the Dome: Reed gets justice post," *The News and Observer*, May 17, 1988, p. 6A; "Black Attorney Heads Largest Group in NC Justice Department," *The Carolinian* (Raleigh, NC), April 28, 1988, p. 5; "Under the Dome: Attorney general promotes deputies," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), March 5, 1990, pp. 1B, 3B;

# HON. ROBERT A. EVANS

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Robert A. Evans is a prominent attorney and jurist. Evans served as a District Court Judge from 1998-2008. He was elected as the District Attorney for Nash, Edgecombe, and Wilson Counties, a position he held from 2009-2022.

Evans served as Chairman of the Governor's Crime Commission (2017) and is a past president of the NC Conference of District Attorneys (2014-2015). NC Attorney General Josh Stein recently awarded him the Dogwood Award.

Evans holds a BA in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a JD from the University of Pennsylvania.



Rocky Mount, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.ncdps.gov/news/press-releases/2017/03/02/cooper-names-da-robert-evans-gcc-chairman>;  
<https://ncdoj.gov/attorney-general-josh-stein-honors-five-eastern-north-carolinians-with-2022-dogwood-awards/>;  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Robert\\_A.\\_Evans](https://ballotpedia.org/Robert_A._Evans);  
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p16062coll5/id/17092/>

# SECRETARY RONALD J. PENNY

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Ronald J. Penny has served as the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Revenue since 2017. Before joining the Department of Revenue, Secretary Penny held numerous professional roles in state government, the North Carolina university system, and the private sector. Penny served as a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Public Administration at North Carolina Central University. He served as Chair of the department for more than a decade.

Penny was the first Vice President of Human Resources for the University of North Carolina System. Before that appointment, he served 8 years as the Director of the NC Office of State Personnel (now NC Office of State Human Resources). He served as a member of the executive cabinet of former Governor James B. Hunt. In 1999, he served as President of the National Association of State Personnel Executives.

Other professional experiences include Senior Managing Partner in Penny & Barnes, a multi-state law firm in northeastern NC and Tidewater Virginia, General Counsel to the Chancellor of Elizabeth City State University and environmental attorney for E.I. DuPont Corporation in Delaware.

Penny holds a BS in Economics from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, summa cum laude, and a Juris Doctor from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is a member of the North Carolina Bar.



Raleigh, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.ncdor.gov/about-us/administration-and-leadership/secretary-ronald-g-penny-biography>

# SAVONALA "SAVI" HORNE

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Savonala “Savi” Horne is Executive Director of the North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers' Land Loss Prevention Project, a non-profit law firm that offers legal representation of clients, community economic development, and professional outreach in the effort to promote wealth, land preservation, and rural livelihoods. As a state, regional and national non-governmental organization leader, Horne has been instrumental in addressing the needs of socially disadvantaged farmers and rural communities.

Horne completed six years of service on the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. She serves on the boards of the National Family Farm Coalition and the Rural Coalition. Horne is a member of the Coordinating Council of Black Land and Power Coalition and the Leadership Team of the National Black Food and Justice Alliance. She is a recipient of the 2020 American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (SEER) Award for Excellence in Environmental, Energy, and Resources Stewardship.

Horne received her B.A. in Urban Legal Studies from City College, City University of New York, and her J.D. from Rutgers. Horne graduated from Rutgers University School of Law-Newark, New Jersey. She was admitted to the New York State Bar in 1990.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://aawnc.unca.edu/faces/savi-horne>; <https://jedsy.yale.edu/new-horizons-conservation/profile/savi-horne>; <https://nffc.net/about-us/our-team/savi-horne/>;  
<https://www.landloss.org/team/savonala-savi-horne/index.html>

# SEBASTIAN REGINALD KENAN

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S. Reginald Kenan is a politician and attorney from Duplin County. He has served in solo private practice for decades. Kenan practices civil and criminal law at his firm, located in Warsaw. His clients have included Branch Bank & Trust, Centura Bank, Kenansville and Consumers Title Insurance Company, and Southern National Bank.

In addition to his work as an attorney, Kenan has been committed to serving southeastern North Carolina's public schools since the late 1980s. He first served on the Board of Education for Duplin County Schools in 1989. He was again elected to the Board, as a representative for District 4, in 2012 and 2016.

Governor Beverly Perdue appointed Kenan to the North Carolina State Board of Education in 2009 to fill the District 2 seat for southeastern North Carolina. He currently serves on the state Board of Education as a representative for the Southeast Education Region.

Kenan has served on the Board of Directors for BB&T Bank and is a member of the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers, North Carolina Bar Association, North Carolina State Bar. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Guilford College and a JD from Campbell University's Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law.



Warsaw, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.wral.com/cooper-nominates-three-to-serve-on-state-board-of-education/16678620/>

# HON. W. FREDERICK GORE

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Judge W. Frederick “Fred” Gore grew up in Supply. After high school, Gore joined the NC National Guard as an infantry soldier and completed basic and individual training before leaving for college. Gore attended the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where he earned a B.S.B.A. He then earned a JD from Appalachian School of Law in Grundy, VA.

Gore’s National Guard unit was mobilized to Iraq from 2006 - 2007. After returning home, Gore joined the Durham County District Attorney’s Office as an Assistant District Attorney. He became a commissioned JAG Officer in the NC National Guard later that year.

Gore joined the District Attorney’s office in his home district of Brunswick, Bladen, and Columbus Counties in 2011. Shortly after, Gore was mobilized to serve in Kuwait, serving as the Chief Prosecutor and Officer In Charge for the 113th Sustainment Brigade’s Legal Team. Gore rejoined the District Attorney’s office upon his return.

In 2014, Gore was elected to the District Court Bench for Bladen, Brunswick and Columbus Counties. A certified Juvenile Court Judge, Gore served as the primary juvenile judge for the district until 2020. He was elected to the North Carolina Court of Appeals.

Gore is a member of Prince Hall Masonic Lodge #786 and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. He continues to serve as a Major in the JAG Corps.



Supply, NC

Compiled from:  
<http://judgefredgore.com/>;  
<https://www.nccourts.gov/judicial-directory/fred-gore>;  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/judge-fred-gore-b6b15532>



# HON. WANDA G. BRYANT

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Wanda G. Bryant is a retired judge. She began her legal career in 1982 as an attorney with Walton, Fairley, and Jess. She was named as an assistant district attorney in the 13th Prosecutorial District in 1983. She was the first woman and first African American to serve in this role.

Bryant joined the Police Executive Research Forum in Washington, DC as their first staff attorney in 1987. She remained in this position until 1989 when she became an assistant United States attorney for the District of Columbia. Bryant returned to North Carolina in 1993, when she was appointed Senior deputy attorney general with the NC Office of the Attorney General. She was the first African American to serve in this role.

Governor Mike Easley appointed Bryant to the Court of Appeals in 2001 and reappointed her in 2002. She was then elected to two eight-year terms on the bench, in 2004 and 2012. She retired from the bench in 2020.

Bryant holds an undergraduate degree in history and comparative area studies from Duke University and a JD from the North Carolina Central University School of Law.



Southport, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.ali.org/members/member/436043/>; <https://www.ncbar.org/nc-lawyer/2021-02/judge-wanda-bryant/>;  
<https://www.nccourts.gov/news/tag/press-release/chief-judge-linda-mcgee-and-judge-wanda-bryant-retire-from-the-north-carolina-court-of-appeals>

# HON. YVONNE MIMS EVANS

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Yvonne Mims Evans is a pioneering attorney and jurist. She began her career as the first female attorney with the law firm of Ferguson, Stein, and Chambers in Charlotte and later became the firm's first female partner and the first Black woman to make partner at a law firm in Charlotte. She then worked as Managing Attorney with the Children's Law Center.

Evans served as a Mecklenburg Superior Court judge for fifteen years. She was appointed to the bench by Governor Mike Easley in 2003 and became the first female Chief District Court Judge in Mecklenburg County. She retired from the bench in 2018.

Evans holds a BA from Wellesley College and a JD from the Duke University School of Law. She recently served on the NC Innocence Inquiry Commission.



Hendersonville, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://innocencecommission-nc.gov/about/yvonne-mims-evans/>;  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Yvonne\\_M.\\_Evans](https://ballotpedia.org/Yvonne_M._Evans);  
<https://www.ncbar.org/members/communities/committees/minorities-in-the-profession/legal-legends-of-color/honorees/prior-honorees-2020/>

# DR. ALBERT L TURNER

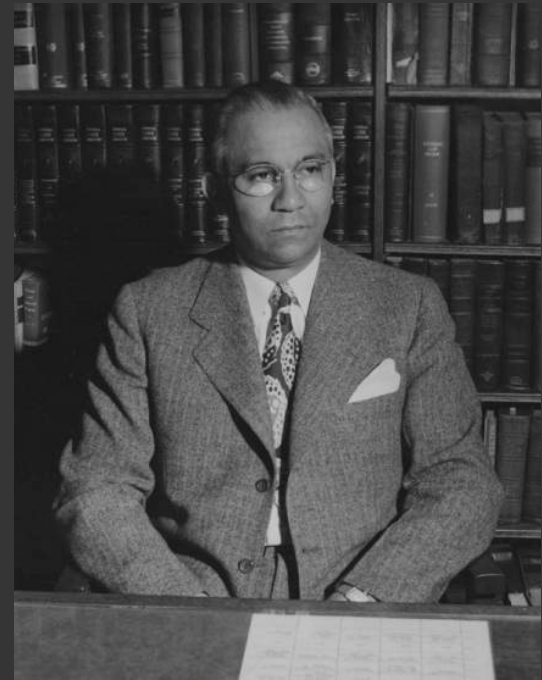
## 1900–1973

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Dr. Albert L. Turner was born in New Orleans in 1900. He earned undergraduate and law degrees from Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio and an MA and PhD (in political science) from the University of Michigan. Turner began his career as a registrar and professor of political science at Tuskegee Institute.

Dr. Turner moved to Durham, NC in 1941 to accept a position as one of the first full-time law faculty at North Carolina College at Durham (now NC Central University) School of Law. Turner became the first African American and first full-time dean of the law school in 1946. Serving in this role for nearly two decades (1946-1965), Turner was responsible for the school's accreditation by the American Bar Association and the establishment of the school's alumni association. He was also at the helm when the law school admitted its first women as students.

Dr. Turner retired as Dean Emeritus of the NCCU School of Law in 1965. He passed away in Princeton, NJ in 1973.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:

[http://andjusticeforall.dconc.gov/gallery\\_images/albert-l-turner-first-african-american-dean-north-carolina-central-university-law-school/](http://andjusticeforall.dconc.gov/gallery_images/albert-l-turner-first-african-american-dean-north-carolina-central-university-law-school/);

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/787618158/?article=67020513-d08f-442b-af76-b5562a5b2f67>;

“Former NCCU Dean Dies at 73” *The Durham Sun* (Durham, NC), July 6, 1973, p. 14-A,

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/786969926/?article=238640b8-6bf5-4053-9b6a-71b2c747c5e6>;

“Turner Talks Here Monday,” *The Summer School Weekly* (Chapel Hill, NC), June 22, 1956, p. 1,

<https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn92073228/1956-06-22/ed-1/seq-1/#words=Albert+L+Turner>;

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/135629666/albert-louis-turner>

# ANNIE BROWN KENNEDY 1924–2023

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Annie Brown Kennedy was the second African American woman to be licensed to practice law in North Carolina and the first African American woman appointed to the North Carolina General Assembly. Born in Atlanta, Kennedy earned an AB in Economics from Spelman College and a JD from Howard University School of Law, where she met her husband, Harold Kennedy Jr.

The Kennedys both passed the bar exam in 1953. They married and moved to Harold Kennedy's hometown of Winston-Salem, where they opened a law practice together, Kennedy and Kennedy (later Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy, and Kennedy, LLP). The Kennedys were involved in civil rights litigation and won several landmark civil rights cases, including *Simpkins v. City of Greensboro*.

Annie Brown Kennedy became the first Black woman to serve as a Presidential Elector in North Carolina in 1976. Three years later, in 1979, Kennedy became the first African American woman to be appointed to the North Carolina General Assembly. She was subsequently elected to six additional terms. Kennedy did not seek reelection in 1994 and returned to practicing law.

Today, the law firm she and her husband founded is run by their sons, Harvey Kennedy and Harold Kennedy III and is the oldest operating African American law firm in the state.

Annie Brown Kennedy passed away on January 17, 2023.



Winston-Salem, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.ncaj.com/news/in-memoriam-annie-brown-kennedy/>;  
<https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/items/show/6229>;  
<https://www.wfdd.org/story/annie-brown-kennedy-first-black-woman-north-carolinas-legislature-has-died>;  
<https://www.russellfuneralservice.com/obituary/annie-kennedy/>;  
<https://www.wfmynews2.com/article/news/local/gov-cooper-honors-former-nc-rep-annie-brown-kennedy/83-b517e328-b1d9-4111-8a62-b6e3de13d327>;  
<https://wschronicle.com/2018/02/kennedys-serving-law-60-years/>; <https://sohp.org/2017/10/23/election-season-annie-brown-kennedy-black-voting-rights-and-black-elected-officials/>;  
<https://www.starnewsonline.com/article/NC/20050118/News/605048195/WM>

# CHARLES EDWARD DAYE

## 1944–2022

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Charles Edward Daye was the Henry Brandis Professor of Law Emeritus at the University of North Carolina School of Law and the Deputy Director of the UNC Center for Civil Rights. He was the first African American to hold a tenure-track faculty position at the UNC School of Law.

Daye joined the faculty at UNC in 1972 and served as a law professor for over 40 years. He served as the adviser to UNC's Black Law Students Association for the entire length of his tenure. He also served as the Dean of the North Carolina Central University School of Law from 1981-1985. Prior to joining the law faculty at UNC, Daye was the first Black law clerk on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

Daye was known for his research on affirmative action, fair housing, and diversity in law schools and co-authored two books: *Housing and Community Development* and *North Carolina Law of Torts*.

Daye was a graduate of North Carolina Central University and Columbia Law School. He was recognized as a Legal Legend of Color by the State Bar of North Carolina in 2019. The Charles E. Daye Service Award at the UNC Chapel Hill School of Law is named in his honor.

Charles Daye passed away on December 25, 2022.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://law.unc.edu/people/charles-edward-daye/>;  
<https://www.ncaj.com/news/in-memoriam-charles-e-daye>;  
<https://www.scarboroughhargettcelebration.com/obituaries/Charles-Daye/#!/Obituary>;  
<https://www.nctbar.org/members/committees/minorities-in-the-profession/legal-legends-of-color/honorees/prior-honorees-2019/>;  
<https://law.unc.edu/academics/centers-and-programs/center-for-civil-rights/>

Celebrating Leaders in the Legal Profession

# CLIFTON E. JOHNSON

## 1941–2009

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Clifton Earl Johnson was North Carolina's first African American Assistant State Prosecutor, first African American Chief District Court Judge, first African American Resident Superior Court Judge, and the first North Carolina Central University School of Law alumnus to serve on the North Carolina Court of Appeals.

Johnson earned an undergraduate degree and J.D. from North Carolina Central University. While a law student he spent his summers working as a law clerk for the ACLU in New York. He graduated in 1967.

Johnson entered private practice in Durham for a few years before relocating to Charlotte to serve as an Assistant State Prosecutor. He then served as a District Court Judge and Superior Court Judge in Mecklenburg County until he was appointed to the North Carolina Court of Appeals in 1982. While on the Appellate Court, Johnson served as the first African American Chairman of the North Carolina Judicial Standards Commission.

Known for his commitment to diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, Johnson hired North Carolina's first African American court reporter and the first African American Executive Assistant in the North Carolina Court of Appeals.

Judge Johnson retired from the Court of Appeals as a Senior Associate Judge in 1996. He briefly served as a Recall Judge for the NC Court of Appeals and as a North Carolina Emergency Superior Court Judge in 2008. He passed away in 2009.



Williamston, NC

Compiled from:

[https://www.meckbar.org/?pg=clifton-johnson-chambers-award-winner;](https://www.meckbar.org/?pg=clifton-johnson-chambers-award-winner)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifton\\_Johnson\\_\(jurist\);](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifton_Johnson_(jurist))

[https://qcitymetro.com/2009/06/25/retired\\_judge\\_clifton\\_johnson\\_dies\\_unexpectedly104818968/;](https://qcitymetro.com/2009/06/25/retired_judge_clifton_johnson_dies_unexpectedly104818968/)

<https://www.thecharlottepost.com/index.php?src=news&srctype=detail&category=News&refno=1798;>

<https://ncpedia.org/biography/johnson-clifton-earl;>

[https://legacy.nccu.edu/formsdocs/proxy.cfm?file\\_id=2505](https://legacy.nccu.edu/formsdocs/proxy.cfm?file_id=2505)

# HON. ELRETA MELTON ALEXANDER-RALSTON 1919-1998

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Elreta Melton Alexander-Ralston was the first African American woman to practice law in North Carolina, the first African American woman to argue before the North Carolina Supreme Court, the first African American woman to be elected a judge in the state of North Carolina, and the second African American woman to be elected a judge in the United States.

A respected trial attorney, Alexander-Ralston began her career as an attorney in New York, where she attended law school. Alexander-Ralston was forced to contend with the onerous rules put in place by the North Carolina Bar to prevent African Americans from joining and gained trial experience in New York as she worked to overcome them. She was finally admitted, two years after her first attempt to do so, in 1947. Alexander-Ralston opened a private practice in Greensboro. She later formed one of the first integrated law firms in the South, Alston, Alexander, Pell & Pell.

Alexander-Ralston became the first African American woman to serve as an elected district court judge in the United States when she was elected to the bench in Guilford County in 1968.

Alexander-Ralston earned a BS in Music from North Carolina A&T University at the age of 18 and was the first African American woman to graduate from Columbia Law School. Ralston was also a poet, publishing "When is a Man Free?" in 1967.



Smithfield, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/celebrating-life-judge-elreta-melton-alexander-45>; <https://www.ncbar.org/nc-lawyer/2021-08/2021-legal-legends-of-color-judge-elreta-melton-alexander/>; <https://www.ncpedia.org/ralston-elreta-melton-alexander>; Patricia Timmons-Goodson, "Darlin', the truth will set you free: - A Tribute to Judge Elreta Melton Alexander," *Elon Law Review* 4 no. 1 (2011-2012), 151-174.

# FLOYD BIXLER MCKISSICK 1922–1991

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Lawyer and civil rights activist Floyd Bixler McKissick was the first African American student admitted to the University of North Carolina School of Law.

McKissick studied at Morehouse College in the 1940s, taking a break from his studies to serve in the Army during WWII. He ultimately earned an undergraduate degree and J.D. from North Carolina Central University. He successfully sued the UNC School of Law for admission in 1951 (*McKissick v. Carmichael*); he had already earned a JD by the time he was admitted to the law school but was able to take a few summer courses there.

After law school, McKissick established a law firm in Durham. He focused on defending civil rights activists, families fighting to desegregate schools, and African American workers. He also served as legal counsel for the North Carolina NAACP and as an ad hoc lawyer for the Congress on Racial Equality.

As a civil rights activist, McKissick led the 1957 Royal Parlor Ice Cream Sit-In in Durham and founded the first youth council of the NAACP in Durham in 1958. He led the Congress of Racial Equality from 1966-1968.

McKissick was appointed as a District Court Judge in the 9th District in 1990 and passed away less than a year later, in 1991.



Asheville, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/mckissick-floyd-bixler>;  
<https://naacp.org/resources/honoring-life-floyd-b-mckissick-sr>;  
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/floyd-b-mckissick>;  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1991/04/30/core-director-nc-judge-floyd-b-mckissick-dies/643f2b77-6114-4b50-9d08-c843d65a5dec/>



# GEORGE HENRY WHITE

## 1852–1918

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George Henry White was an attorney and politician during the Reconstruction era. Enslaved in the early years of his life, White studied at Howard University from 1873 to 1877 and joined the North Carolina Bar in 1879.

White worked as a high school principal following law school and was elected to the NC House of Representatives in 1880. In 1886, he was elected solicitor and prosecuting attorney in the "Black Second" district of North Carolina.

White served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1897-1899 and 1899-1901. He was the only African American to serve in the 55th Congress (1897-1899) and was the last African American to serve in Congress until 1928. While in Congress, he introduced bills and resolutions that supported the civil rights, lives, and dignity of African American people, including an unsuccessful bill that would have made lynching a federal crime. He was deeply troubled by the Wilmington insurrection of 1898, during which white supremacists violently overthrew the city's fusion government, and vocally supported reducing representation in the House of Representatives for states with discriminatory voting laws.

After leaving Congress, White opened law offices in Washington, D.C. (1901) and in Philadelphia (1905). He died in 1918.



Rosindale, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://history.house.gov/People/Detail/23657>

# JULIUS L. CHAMBERS

## 1936–2013

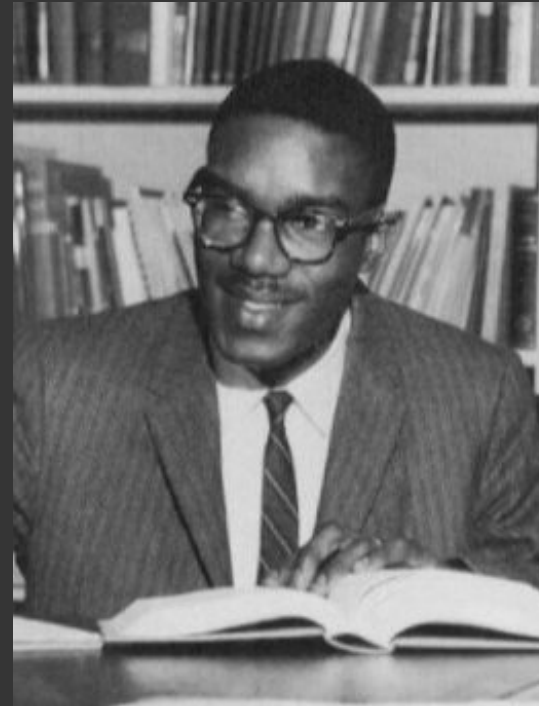
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Julius L. Chambers was a renowned civil rights attorney. Chambers successfully argued eight cases before the United States Supreme Court, including *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, which upheld the use of busing to integrate schools.

Chambers earned a B.A. from North Carolina Central University, an M.A. in History from the University of Michigan, and a J.D. from the University of North Carolina School of Law. Chambers was the first African American editor-in-chief of *The North Carolina Law Review* and graduated first in his law school class. After law school, Chambers taught at Columbia Law School and earned a Master of Law during his time there.

Chambers established a one-person law firm in Charlotte in 1964, specializing in civil rights law. The firm later became Ferguson, Stein, and Chambers, the state's first integrated law firm. The firm worked closely with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. They won several landmark Supreme Court cases in addition to *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, including Title VII employment discrimination cases *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* and *Albemarle Paper Co. v. Moody*.

Chambers left the firm to serve as the third Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (1984-1993). Chambers returned to Durham in 1993 to serve as the Chancellor of North Carolina Central University (1993-2001). He returned to private practice Ferguson, Stein, and Chambers upon his retirement from the University. Chambers passed away in 2013.



Mt. Gilead, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.naacpldf.org/about-us/history/julius-levonne-chambers/>;  
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/charlotte/name/julius-chambers-obituary?pid=166200817>;  
<https://www.ncbar.org/members/communities/committees/minorities-in-the-profession/legal-legends-of-color/honorees/prior-honorees-2019/>;  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/07/us/julius-chambers-a-fighter-for-civil-rights-dies-at-76.html>; <http://www.fergusonsumter.com/our-history>;  
<https://law.unc.edu/academics/centers-and-programs/center-for-civil-rights/>

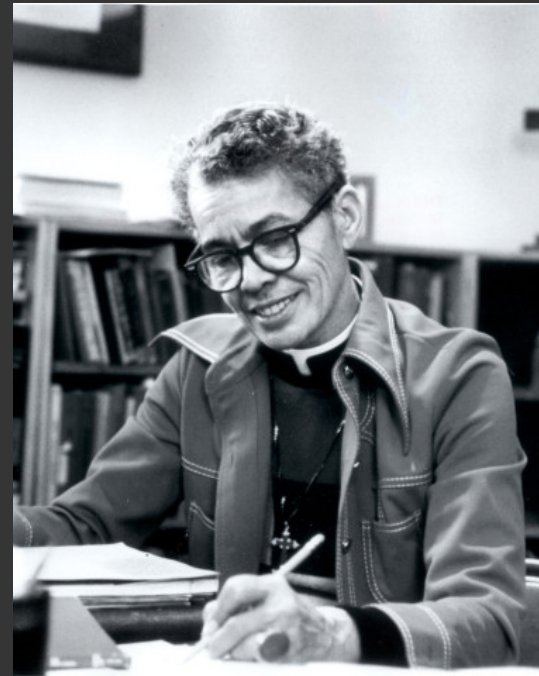
# REV. DR. PAULI MURRAY 1910–1985

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Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray was a groundbreaking legal scholar, civil rights activist, feminist, educator, writer, and Episcopal priest. Born in Baltimore, Murray's formative years were spent in Durham.

Rev. Dr. Murray's largest contributions to the field of law were States' Laws on Race and Color (often referred to as the "Bible" of civil rights law), written in 1951 for the Women's Division of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, and "Jane Crow and the Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII," co-authored with Dorothy Kenyon in 1965. "Jane Crow and the Law" formed the foundation of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's brief to the Supreme Court in *Reed v. Reed*; Ginsburg listed Murray and Kenyon as the brief's co-authors. Murray's legal analysis was also central to the arguments made by the plaintiffs in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Murray earned a J.D. from Howard School of Law, an LL.M. from U.C. Berkeley, and was the first African American to earn a J.S.D. from Yale Law School. Murray was a member of the California and New York Bars. Murray, who was queer and explored various gender identities, is the namesake of the North-Carolina based Pauli Murray LGBTQ+ Bar Association.



Durham, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.newspapers.com/clip/10327252/dr-pauli-murray-obituary/>;  
<https://www.paulimurraycenter.com/who-is-pauli>;  
<https://paulimurray.yalecollege.yale.edu/subpage-2>;  
<https://www.womenhistory.org/education-resources/biographies/pauli-murray>;  
<https://www.gts.edu/daa-pauli-murray>;  
<https://lgbtqbarnc.com/>;  
<http://www.lgbtbar.org/assets/The-Life-and-Legacy-of-Pauli-Murray.pdf>;  
<https://www.aclu.org/issues/womens-rights/pauli-murrays-indelible-mark-fight-equal-rights>

# HON. RALPH CORNELIUS "SKIP" GINGLES, JR 1946–2015

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Ralph C. Gingles was an attorney, jurist, and voting rights pioneer. Born in Gaston County, Gingles earned an undergraduate degree from UNC Chapel Hill and a JD from the University of Virginia.

Gingles began his career in private practice in Gaston county. He was a general practice lawyer who advertised legal services related to automobile accidents, wrongful death, civil law, criminal law, bankruptcy, and real estate.

Gingles served as a district court judge in Gaston County from 1996-2000. He was reappointed to the bench by Governor Mike Easley in 2001 and later became Chief Judge. He remained on the bench until his death in 2015.

In addition to his work as an attorney and a jurist, Gingle furthered voting rights on a national level. Gingles was the lead plaintiff in *Thornburg v. Gingles*, which successfully challenged the creation of new districts for the North Carolina General Assembly. The districts diluted Black voting strength and the Supreme Court of the United States found that they violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. At the time of his death, *Thornburg v. Gingles* had been cited in nearly 700 Section 2 cases.

Gingles served on the boards of directors for the Boy Scouts of America and the United Way. He passed away in 2015.



Crowders Mountain, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/ldf-statement-on-the-passing-of-judge-ralph-gingles-jr-plaintiff-in-seminal-voting-rights-case/>;  
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/gastongazette/name/ralph-gingles-obituary?id=17700816>;  
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p16062coll5/id/892>;  
<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1985/83-1968>;  
"Statewide Races: 27A District Court Judgeship," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 3, 2002, p. 10L; "Ralph C. Gingles, Jr. Attorney at Law" (ad), *The Charlotte Post*, July 27, 1989, p. 12B.

# HON. RICHARD CANNON ERWIN 1923–2006

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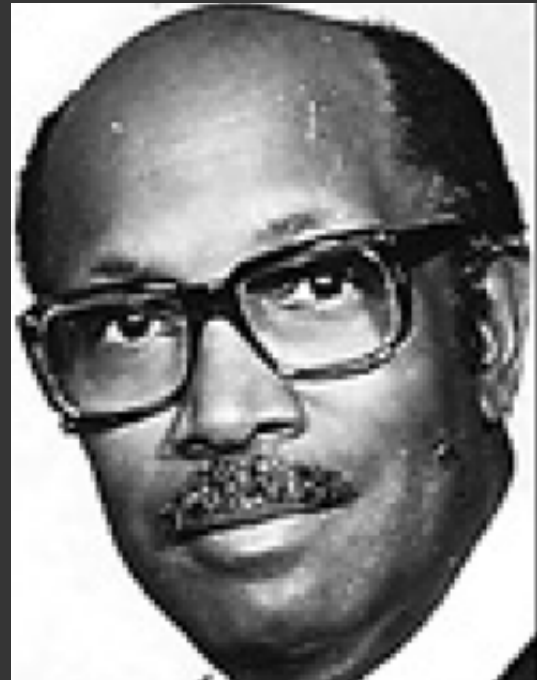
Richard Cannon Erwin was an attorney and jurist. He was the first African American man to serve as a federal district court judge in North Carolina.

Erwin began his career in private practice in Winston-Salem. Erwin was elected to the North Carolina General Assembly, serving in the House of Representatives during the 1975 and 1977 sessions. He continued to work in private practice during this time.

In 1977, Erwin was appointed by Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. to the Court of Appeals. He was elected to a second term in 1978 and resigned from the Court in 1980 to accept an appointment as judge of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina.

Erwin belonged to the N.C. Association of Black Lawyers, The American and National Bar Associations, the Bar of the United States Supreme Court, the National Bar Association, and the Federal Judges Association. He was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi and was the founding member of Kappa Gamma Boule of Sigma Pi Phi.

Erwin served in the U.S. Army from 1943 until 1946 and was a First Sergeant at the time of his discharge. He earned an L.L.B. Degree (Law Review) from Howard University School of Law in 1951, a Doctor of Laws Degree from Pfeiffer College in 1980, and a Doctor of Laws Degree from Johnson C. Smith University in 1981.



Marion, NC

Compiled from:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Erwin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Erwin);  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Richard\\_Erwin](https://ballotpedia.org/Richard_Erwin);  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/198567560/richard-cannon-erwin>;  
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/winstonsalem/name/richard-erwin-obituary?id=28123085>

# HON. SHIRLEY L. FULTON

## 1952–2023

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The Honorable Shirley L. Fulton was the first African American woman to serve as a prosecutor in Mecklenburg County, and the first African American woman to serve as a North Carolina superior court judge. She was a founding partner of Tin Fulton Walker & Owen.

Fulton spent over 20 years in the Mecklenburg County Courthouse, serving as Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, Resident Superior Court Judge, District Court Judge, and Assistant District Attorney. While on the bench, Fulton led the courts in developing a system-wide strategic plan, successfully campaigned for bonds to build the current Mecklenburg County Courthouse, and developed programs to address the needs of non-English speaking court participants.

A respected community leader, Fulton served on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Task Force, as Chair of the Board of Advisors for the Charlotte School of Law and as President of the Mecklenburg County Bar. She continued her lifelong commitment to active leadership in community-based programs as the president of the Wesley Heights Community Association and as the owner of The Wadsworth House, a meeting place for corporate, civic and social events. She especially enjoyed serving as a mentor to young people.

Fulton was born in Kingstree, SC. She earned a BS in Business Administration from North Carolina A&T University and a JD from Duke Law School. She passed away on February 8, 2023.



Charlotte, NC

Compiled from:  
<https://www.tinfulton.com/attorneys/shirley-l-fulton/> with additional information from  
<https://www.ncbar.org/news/legal-legends-of-color-adds-four/>;  
[https://www.aegriersonsfcc.com/obituaries/Shirley-Fulton-2/#!/TributeWall](https://www.aegriersonsfcc.com/obituaries/Shirley-Fulton-2/#!/TributeWall;);  
<https://www.wunc.org/2023-02-08/pioneering-judge-shirley-fulton-dies-at-71>