

# INTRODUCTION

The Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition is seen as a response to the multifaceted situation of the Black legal worker. In particular, the competition of oral advocacy addresses itself to the interconnected problems of overburdened litigation-ridden practitioners; declining Black law student admissions and graduations; and the failure of law schools to prepare Black law students for the kind of practice in which they will probably engage. "Frederick Douglass" is aimed for the humanistic and minority practitioner who, with little time and less backup research, confronts confused and 'bad' law daily. The Competition hones in on the decline in Black admissions to law schools by providing an interesting and lively recruitment situation in the local and regional arguments. Lastly, "Frederick Douglass" is a strenuous training exercise in writing and argument for students whose practice will be consumed in brief writing and argument and whose law school education is not focused on either.

*Every Black American, LaRaza Unida, and American Indian Law Student Association member was actively encouraged to participate in "Frederick Douglass."* Our rules provided that any two persons who were members of B.A.L.S.A., LaRaza, or A.I.L.S.A. attending school in the same B.A.L.S.A. region could form a team. Each team submitted a brief and engaged in oral argument in its B.A.L.S.A. region on dates set by the appropriate regional director. The regions selected two teams to represent them at the national level on April 17, 1976, in Washington, D.C.

As with any virgin effort we have had difficulties, however, Professor Douglass Thomas of Harvard University Law School provided us with an excellent and substantial record, although the dissemination of this record was delayed beyond our deadlines. We further had difficulty with the receipt of the record by B.A.L.S.A. and LaRaza chapters, frequently finding the record languishing in a university mailbox. Student response in light of objective conditions was excellent with twenty-four teams participating on a regional basis, filing briefs and giving arguments in five of the six B.A.L.S.A. regions.

The practicing and teaching bar was cooperative and helpful. Over fifty practicing lawyers gave time as oral judges. Further, several faculty offered considerable coaching assistance for local and regional teams.

The co-sponsorship of the American Association of Law Schools Section on Minority Groups was concrete. Professor Ralph Smith coordinated the faculty input. We owe much to Professors Walter Leonard and Derrick Bell for their assistance to Professor Thomas in the preparation of the record. Equal recognition goes to Professors Roberta Botchwey, Wiley Daniels, Marilyn Ainsworth, Henry McGee, and Smith, as well as to Attorney Drew Days and U.S. District Clerk Brenda Spears, who handled brief reading duties.

Our oral judges were outstanding, operating on an extremely tight time schedule. The list of practitioners and local judges who assisted us is long,

However, we owe special thanks to the Honorable Wade McCree and the Honorable William Bryant, who despite the death of their esteemed colleague the Honorable William Hastie, joined us as our national finals bench.

In addition to human resources, we were able to obtain some material aid. The A.B.A.-Law Student Division, N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Professors Leonard and Smith made monetary contributions. From Lawyers Co-op, West Publishing Company, Little, Brown and Company, And Appleton Press we received excellent and suitable volumes for the winners of our awards. Among those volumes were the works of Black scholars Kellis Parker and Derrick Bell.

The Charles Hamilton Houston Award for the best team went to Sisters Joyce Hartsfield and Linda Ashford of the Syracuse University Law Center. The best oralist award, the Issac Riffin Prize, was given to Sis. Hartsfield for her outstanding oral performance. The best brief award, the Charlotte Ray Prize, went to Brothers Sherman Anderson and Richard Humphreys. The work of both teams is included in this issue of the Black Law Journal. To Professor Douglass Thomas, who did too much for us, went the first annual William B. Hastie Award for outstanding faculty service. It is noteworthy that each of our prizes is named for a Black man or woman who set standards of excellence in the legal arena: Charles Hamilton Houston, architect of the legal civil rights strategy. Issac Ruffin, the first Black man admitted to the bar in the United States; and Charlotte Ray, the first Black woman to practice in this country. Our faculty service award is named for the Honorable William B. Hastie because his entire career was full of outstanding service to all of us.

We had many problems in our first year, but we accomplished our task. We had a competition which laid the foundation for an institution which can help build a better Black bar. Our difficulty was predictable even in our name; nothing of value comes without a struggle!

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