



Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit

Newsletter #22

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Justice Kagan

KICKING OFF THE LAW CLERK INITIATIVE

Over 300 current and former law clerks and the judges with whom they worked in the D.C. Circuit Courts were in the Courthouse Atrium on October 21, 2014, for a reception kicking off the Society's Law Clerk Initiative, an effort to encourage law clerks to become active in recording, preserving, and publicizing the history of the D.C. Circuit Courts. Justice Elena Kagan, a former law clerk to Judge Abner Mikva, talked to the clerks after they were warmly welcomed by Chief Judge Merrick B. Garland, Chief Judge Richard W. Roberts and Judge Ellen Segal Huvelle, the Society Board member who proposed the Initiative.



Judge Huvelle



Law Clerk Reception



WHAT LIES AHEAD

Mock Court Program for High School Youth

Over 100 [high school students](#) from throughout the Washington area will soon be preparing arguments for presentation before judges of the D.C. Circuit Courts. Students will work with attorney volunteers who will mentor them as they perfect their presentations. On March 20, each student will appear in one of our courtrooms to try to convince the judge to rule in his or her favor. Appellate and trial court judges will hear the students' arguments and join the students for a reception afterward to honor them for their efforts.



Judging Then and Now

“Judging Now and Then” – a dialogue featuring Senior Judge Paul Friedman, who joined the U.S. District Court in 1994, and Judge Katanji Brown Jackson, who joined the Court in 2013, moderated by Miguel Estrada. In this, the second event of the Society's Law Clerk Initiative, the judges will compare their experiences on the bench as they discuss changes in the confirmation process, the makeup of the Court, dockets, training, staffing, technology, and the impact of these and other changes on judging. The program will be presented in the Ceremonial Courtroom on Wednesday, February 25. Watch for additional information.



INTRODUCING THE CHAIR OF THE SOCIETY'S COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Jim Johnston, (pictured left) Chair of the Society's Communication Committee, is a telecommunications lawyer with serious writer's credentials. For instance, the White House Historical Society Magazine just published his *Lincoln and the Washingtons*. Jim started his writing career 25 years ago because, as a sole practitioner, he thought it might attract clients. It was a mistake on two counts, he jokes. It didn't attract clients, and, worse, it was more fun than law. So Jim began freelancing for *Legal Times* and *The American Lawyer* and later for *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. He won two journalism awards along the way.

Jim then turned to books, publishing two histories: *The Recollections of Margaret Loughborough*, about a woman who lived in both Richmond and Washington during the Civil War, and *From Slave Ship to Harvard*, the true story of five generations of an extraordinary African American family.

Jim has enriched the Society's website with his articles, and has urged and inspired historians, lawyers, and others to write about the history of the D.C. Circuit Courts and their judges, a crusade that shows no signs of quieting down. The result? A website with [increased historical content](#) that promises an even richer array of materials to accompany Jim's active service on the Society's Board.



OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

–You'll be surprised to learn how [security was handled in City Hall](#), the building that housed the District's judiciary in the 1860's.

–[Read](#) about the first attempt at a presidential assassination, the decision of the jury, and the sentence handed down by Chief Judge William Cranch (pictured left).

ON VIEW - THE PORTRAIT OF JUDGE AUBREY E. ROBINSON

[Aubrey Robinson](#), Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia from 1982 to 1992, had a strong moral compass and an abiding sense of responsibility to his community. Born in New Jersey in 1922, he received undergraduate and law degrees from Cornell University. Judge Robinson served in the Army during World War II and thereafter went into private practice in Washington, D.C. Appointed to the district court by President Johnson in 1966, Robinson was fiercely independent and a stickler for judicial decorum. He issued significant rulings on mental health services in the District of Columbia, and his criticisms of overcrowding and confinement in the federal system gave rise to new



standards in community-based residential facilities for the mentally ill. In 1987, Judge Robinson sentenced naval intelligence analyst Jonathan Pollard to life in prison for selling classified information to Israel, a transaction that Israel did not admit until 1998. During his tenure as Chief, Judge Robinson earned high marks and considerable respect from his colleagues. Judge Robinson took senior status in 1992 and passed away in 2000.