

Remarks to CHH Preparatory Law School Program 7/26/2013

Good evening!

My name is Ronald Jessamy. As you heard, I am an attorney here in the District of Columbia.

You may be asking yourselves *why is he here?*

I am here because I have been in Washington long enough to know whose calls to answer.

When DT calls, you answer.

Seriously though, I hope I will say something that will be of some small benefit as you begin to embark upon your law school career.

First, let me congratulate each and every one of you for participating in and completing this invaluable undertaking.

You cannot begin to imagine how much of a head start you will have on your contemporaries who in just a few weeks will begin their law school experience.

But you have been there! You have 'done that' so to speak.

You have had a small taste of the law school experienced.

You have learned something about research and writing.

You have learned something about oral advocacy.

You, perhaps for the first time in your life, will start out on a journey with a 'leg up' on others.

Boy, what a magnificent feeling that must be.

And, you owe this remarkable experience to your CHH Preparatory experience.

Now before I started law school over 40 years ago, there was only one program of a similar nature in existence that I knew of. It was sponsored by the American Bar Association. (CLEO) And, if I am not mistaken, it was extremely difficult to get into it which may be why I did not even try. Actually, the real reason is that I needed to work. Now that I think about it, it seems to me that it was designed for students who would be going to majority white law schools. Unlike this program that accepts students who will be going to minority law schools as well.

Based upon what I heard from those who attended the CLEO programs, back in the day, I do not believe there was a focus on legal giants, such as CHH for whom this program is named.

This CHH Preparatory Law School Program was not always housed in this wonderful law school facility. It was wherever Donald Temple could, if I may use a colloquial term 'beg up' some space. And, beg he did.

Thank goodness for DT and Everett Bellamy's persistence, it now has a permanent home in this wonderful law school building.

I tell you, these gentleman have built this program in a tradition modeled after Charles Hamilton Houston, *the man*.

I am a member of the Washington Bar Association, an organization of which Charles Hamilton Houston was one of its founder in 1925, as are DT and Everett Bellamy. Also, Judge Inez Smith Reid, who I understand spoke to this group a few weeks ago is also a member of the WBA, Judicial Council Division. DT is a recipient of one of our association's most prestigious awards, the Ollie May Cooper Award. That award is given to an individual who has done something that enhances the bar's standing in the community. Dean Bellamy is in our organization's Hall of Fame. Judge Reid is a recipient of the Ollie May Cooper Award, in our Hall of Fame and is the recipient of an award that is named after one of our founders, i.e. "The Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit." The thing about the individuals I just named is they all are dedicated lawyers in the true sense of Houstonian Jurisprudence. On the Washington Bar Association's Web site, Houstonian Jurisprudence is described as "Social change through the application of laws governing equal rights, due process and other legal principles."

There is a well used quote that is attributed to Charles Hamilton Houston that goes something like this:

*"A Lawyer is either a social engineer or a parasite on society".*

What does it mean for a lawyer to be a 'social engineer'? There are as many answers to that inquiry as there are people to answer it. My take on it is that it means that a lawyer crafts and employs strategies that are designed to upset the status quo, blaze a path for a new and better direction.

Or as another attorney, Vernon Jordan, has put it, to be "a disturber of the piece."

Now as you go through life, you will meet individuals who live out the true meaning of being a social engineer.

Back in Houston's day, his challenge was to knock down the barriers of racial apartheid in this country. So he set about the task of doing just that, using the law as his weapon. He, and the cadre of lawyers that he trained, went about trying to dismantle the scourge of racial segregation, in education, in housing, in public transportation and whatever other areas it existed. He devised a strategy that was brilliant. Training and leading lawyers how to go about dismantling unjust laws. But to model your lives after Houston, which I hope you do, you will have to successfully complete law school and pass the bar

examination. And this experience at the CHH Preparatory is your first step on the road to accomplish that.

Do you want to have a rewarding and satisfying law school career? If so, let me suggest just a few things I believe you can do in addition to reading your assignments and studying for tests.

Lesson One: **Be passionate about something,** whether it is:

Racial Profiling

HIV Aids

Advocacy for Children

Literacy

Advocacy for the disabled

You get the point. But, do not feel insulted if the next person does not share your passion for the same cause. He or she may have a cause of their own to be passionate about that is different from yours. Listen to them when they share their passion with you. I will submit to you that this world is large enough for the passions of everyone.

Lesson Two: **Learn to take time to enjoy yourself.** I am sure you all have heard the trite expression that "all work and no play makes Johnny a dull boy." That does not mean that you have to

continue to be or become a 'party animal', but no one will fault you if you take in a party here and there. What about a museum or art show? What about a picnic or a boat outing? Just do something other than work all of the time.

Lesson Three: **Continue to give back.** Most, if not all of you have come from a tradition of performing community service. In fact, that was probably a prerequisite to completing high school and undergraduate school. But just because you have passed those hurdles, please do not stop there. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to participate in activities throughout law school and beyond. Take advantage of them. It will make you feel better, improve the community in which you are working and help to prepare you for a career in social engineering.

There are plenty of modern day CHH's for you to be able to touch and feel. *And*, they may not all be lawyers.