

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
Admission Ceremony

August 2, 2010

Remarks-RCJ

Good Morning to the judges of the United States District Court and to the new admittees.

I want to thank Judge Friedman for those kind introductory remarks.

As Judge Friedman mentioned, I am the immediate past president of the Washington Bar Association.

The Washington Bar Association is a voluntary bar association consisting mostly, not exclusively, of A/A judges and lawyers. It was founded in 1925 at a time when black lawyers were not welcomed into membership in the white voluntary bar associations.

Because of our name, we are sometimes mistaken for the DC Bar, which as all of you know, is the mandatory bar in the District of Columbia. The DC bar has over 90,000 members. While all of the DC Bar's members are not located in the District of Columbia area, a large number of its members do. In fact, Judge Friedman was once the president of the DC Bar. That was before being appointed to the bench of this court.

I would like to note with *unpardonable* pride that the immediate past president of the DC Bar, Attorney Kim Keenan, was once the president of my organization, *i.e.*, The Washington Bar Association.

The Washington Bar Association is sometimes confused with the Bar Association of the District of Columbia (BADC). BADC is another

voluntary bar in this city. African Americans were not permitted to become members of that organization until about 1958. Again, it is with great pride that I note on behalf of the Washington Bar Association, that the current president of the Bar Association of the District of Columbia, Anna Marie Stewart (an associate dean at the UDC/David A. Clark School of Law in this city), is a former board member and secretary of our association.

Since a lot of our communications are sent out mentioning “WBA” somewhere in the body, we are sometimes confused with another voluntary bar association in this city, *i.e.*, the Women’s Bar Association which also uses those initials.

I will note that the first African American admitted to the Women’s Bar Association was an active member of the Washington Bar Association. Her name is Dovey Roundtree. She is in her nineties now and is in a nursing home in North Carolina. Incidentally, I would be remiss if I did not also mention that Attorney Roundtree’s membership in the Women’s Bar Association was sponsored by an attorney who eventually became a judge on this court, now retired Judge Joyce Hens Green. As Ms. Roundtree noted in her recently published book, “Justice Older Than the Law”, Joyce Hens Green was bold and brave in having proposed her name for membership in that all white organization. There was great hostility and some of its board members resigned in protest as a result.

I understand that the reception following this welcoming ceremony is being hosted by the DC Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. Once again, *if I may*, I would like to note that the immediate past president of that association, Ronald Crump, is also a past president of the

Washington Bar Association and its current president, Robie Beatty, is a long-time member of the board of directors of the Washington Bar Association.

With that prospective, I do not think I will be bragging to state that the Washington Bar Association has significantly contributed to the diversity of fabric and fiber of the this City's legal community.

I want to thank Judge Friedman for allowing me to participate in this ceremony.

What do I have to say by way of welcoming remarks to you as new admittees?

Some of you may never set foot in this building or its annex after today.

On the other hand, some of you may become regular practitioners in this court.

Still others may use your admission only when sponsoring others for admission down the road.

It is not unimaginable that some of you may only appear in this court house when accommodating an out-of-state lawyer who needs you to serve as local counsel in a matter.

Whatever category you may fall into, all of you have taken an oath this morning that requires you to be knowledgeable of the court's rules, observe the ethical standard required of a practicing attorney and to support the Constitution of the United States.

The bar card that I have in my wallet and displayed to the guards when I came into the building this morning reflects the fact that my

admission date to the bar of this court was July 1, 1974. That means for all of you who are under 36 years of age, I have been coming here before you were born.

There is almost always an awesome and exhilarating feeling that comes over me when I come here. There is an old, and probably worn out expression used in real estate, *i.e.*, location, location, location.

Picture this if you will. Here you are, walking out of the building on to Pennsylvania Avenue, sometimes referred to as "*America's Main Street*." The majestic dome of the Capitol Building sits to the left as you hail a cab or begin walking west on Pennsylvania Avenue. The Capitol Dome is perhaps the ultimate symbol of democracy and freedom that can be found anywhere in the world.

Although not visible at this point, you know that the White House is just to the west. Yet another symbol of democracy and freedom.

I cannot tell you how many times when leaving this building I started thinking how great it is to be a lawyer, practicing in the federal court here in the District of Columbia, *the nation's capital, the capitol of the free world*. I dare say that the scene and feeling cannot be replicated any place else in this country, except of course, on the steps of the United States Supreme Court.

What about this Federal Courthouse building and its annex. They are named for people? That leads us to the question, who were these men?

On the Court's Web site, there is a page devoted to the history of the courthouse buildings.

From it we learn that the main courthouse building was opened in November 1952. In 2002, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1997, the building was renamed the E. Barrett Prettyman Courthouse.

**E. Barrett Prettyman** was named to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit by President Harry Truman in 1945. He served on that court from 1945 until his death in 1971. He was its Chief Judge from 1958-1960.

Judge Prettyman was born on August 23, 1891 in Lexington, VA

He received a B.A. from Randolph Macon College in 1910 and a masters degree from there in 1911.

He earned his law degree from Georgetown University Law School in 1915.

Prior to being appointed to the appeals court, he was in private practice in Hopewell, Va., Washington DC, New York City and Hartford, Connecticut.

He also served as a captain in the U.S. Army from 1917 - 1919.

He also served as General Counsel to the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and as District of Columbia Corporation Counsel (a post we now call Attorney General for the District of Columbia)

I am not aware of any association that Judge Prettyman had with the Washington Bar Association.

William B. Bryant: The annex to the E. Barrett Prettyman courthouse building is named for the late Judge William B. Bryant.

Judge Bryant was born on September 18, 1911 in a rural town in Alabama. He was the only child of a railroad porter and a housewife. He moved to Washington DC when his family had to a lynch mob in Alabama.

Judge Bryant graduated first in his class from Howard University in 1932 and from its law school in 1939. One of his law school professors was the legendary Charles Hamilton Houston, who was also one of the founders of the Washington Bar Association.

In 1951 Judge Bryant was appointed to be a federal prosecutor, the first black to be so appointed in the District of Columbia. He was in private practice in the District of Columbia, a partner in the black law firm of Houston, Bryant & Gardner. He taught trial advocacy at Howard University's School of Law.

Judge Bryant was appointed to this court in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson. He served as chief judge from 1977 to 1981. Widely regarded as the first A/A become a chief judge on a federal court in this country. He assumed senior status in 1982, but continued to hear cases until a few days before his death in 2005.

Judge Bryant was well regarded by his peers on the court, the attorneys who practiced before him and by the community at large. The judges of this court unanimously requested that the new annex be named for him. Just days before his death in 2005, President George Bush signed the bill into law doing just that.

Perhaps one of the most fitting tributes to Judge Bryant came from former Chief Judge Thomas F. Hogan of this court. In a 2005 Washington Post newspaper article reporting on his death, Chief Judge Hogan is quoted as saying, that Judge Bryant was “the soul of the court.” He “sought to achieve equal justice, always careful to preserve the dignity of those who appeared before him.”

Judge Bryant does have a tie to the Washington Bar Association. In 1977 we awarded him our highest award, the Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit. The award, in the words of one of our past presidents is given annually to an individual who demonstrates a commitment to Charles Hamilton Houston’s ideals and jurisprudence:

--A jurisprudence which observes and recognized law as a tool for social justice through social engineering;

--A jurisprudence which espouses and demands scholarship, discipline, perseverance, vigilance and dedication in the totality of the legal, social and governmental framework;

--A jurisprudence which impels and challenges man to leadership and service o the betterment of the human race; and

--A jurisprudence which serves and operates throughout the instrumentality of law to disrobe and destroy the perceived encumbrances and trappings of birth, origin, color creed or religion.

As you leave this ceremony today, take to heart the oath you have just sworn to; if you have the time, step outside to take in the majestic setting to the location of this courthouse; and, remember the names and histories of the individuals for whom this building and annex are named. Look them up and learn more about what made them the legal legends they are, as exemplified by having their building so this great significance named for them. Above all else, have a wonderful career in the law as the individuals for whom this courthouse and its annex clearly did.