Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr., Esq.

Oral History Project
The Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit

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The Historical Society of the
District of Columbia Circuit

United States Courts
District of Columbia Circuit

Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr., Esq.

Interviews conducted by:
Pleasant Brodnax, Esq.
July 7, 2017
April 30, 2018

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NOTE

The following pages record interviews conducted on the dates indicated. The interviews were recorded digitally or on cassette tape, and the interviewee and the interviewer have been afforded an opportunity to review and edit the transcript.

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PREFACE

The goal of the Oral History Project of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit is to preserve the recollections of the judges of the Courts of the District of Columbia Circuit and lawyers, court staff, and others who played important roles in the history of the Circuit. The Project began in 1991. Oral history interviews are conducted by volunteer attorneys who are trained by the Society. Before donating the oral history to the Society, both the subject of the history and the interviewer have had an opportunity to review and edit the transcripts.

Indexed transcripts of the oral histories and related documents are available in the Judges' Library in the E. Barrett Prettyman United States Courthouse, 333 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, and the library of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia

With the permission of the person being interviewed, oral histories are also available on the Internet through the Society's Web site, www.dcchs.org. Audio recordings of most interviews, as well as electronic versions of the transcripts, are in the custody of the Society.

Standard Form for Interviewee

INTERVIEWEE ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT

Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit

Oral History Agreement of Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr.

1. In consideration of the recording and preservation of my oral history memoir by the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit, Washington, D.C., and its employees and agents (hereinafter, "the Society"), I, Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr. do hereby grant and convey to the Society and its successors and assigns all of my rights, title, and interest in the voice recordings (digital recordings, cassette tapes) and transcripts of my interviews as described in Schedule A hereto, including literary rights and copyrights. All copies of the voice recordings (digital recordings, cassette tapes) and transcripts are subject to the same restrictions herein provided.

2. I understand that the Society may duplicate, edit, or publish in any form or format, including publication on the Internet, and permit the use of said voice recordings (digital recordings, cassette tapes) and transcripts in any manner that the Society considers appropriate, and I waive any claims I may have or acquire to any royalties from such use.

3. I reserve for myself and to the executor of my estate only the non-exclusive right to use the voice recordings (digital recordings, cassette tapes) and transcripts and their content as a resource for any book, pamphlet, article or other writing of which I or my executor may be the author or co-author.

Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr.
Ronald C. Jessamy
[Name of Interviewee] [Date]

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me this 9th day of May, 2016.

Michelle Elaine Bennett
Notary Public

MICHELLE ELAINE BENNETT NOTARY PUBLIC DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MY COMMISSION EXPIRES 06-14-2019

My Commission expires: June 14, 2019

ACCEPTED this 24th day of May, 2016, by Stephen J. Pollak, President of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit.

Stephen J. Pollak
Stephen J. Pollak

Schedule A

Voice recordings (digital recording, cassette tapes) and transcripts resulting from three interviews of Ronald Jessamy, Sr., conducted on the following dates:

Interview Number and Date	Description of Media Containing Voice Recordings	Pages of Transcript
No. 1, November 4, 2014	Sides A and B of one cassette tape	1-12
No. 2, December 5, 2015	Sides A and B of one cassette tape	13-28
No. 3, April 8, 2015	Sides A and B of one cassette tape	29-79
No. 4; July 7, 2017	Sides A and B of one cassette tape	80-115
No. 5; April 30, 2018	Sides A and B of one cassette tape	116-136

The transcripts of the five interviews are contained on one CD.

The Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit

Oral History Agreement of PLEASANT S. BRODNAX, III

1. Having agreed to conduct an oral history interview with RONALD C. JESSAMY, SR. for the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit, Washington, D.C., and its employees and agents (hereinafter "the Society"), I, PLEASANT S. BRODNAX, III, do hereby grant and convey to the Society and its successors and assigns all of my rights, title, and interest in the voice recordings (digital recordings, cassette tapes) and transcripts of the interviews as described in Schedule A hereto, including literary rights and copyrights.

2. I understand that the Society may duplicate, edit, or publish in any form or format, including publication on the Internet, and permit the use of said voice recordings (digital recordings, cassette tapes) and transcripts in any manner that the Society considers appropriate, and I waive any claims I may have or acquire to any royalties from such use.

3. I agree that I will make no use of the oral history or the information contained therein until it is concluded and edited, or until I receive permission from the Society.

Pleasant S. Brodnax III 10 Dec 2019

Pleasant S. Brodnax, III

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me this

_____ day of _____, 20___.

_____
Notary Public

My Commission expires: _____

ACCEPTED this 13th day of December, 2019, by James E. Rocap, III, President of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit.

James E. Rocap, III

Schedule A

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Oral History of Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr.

First Interview
July 7, 2017

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of The Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewer is Pleasant Broadnax, and the interviewee is Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr.. The interview took place in Mr. Jessamy's office on Friday, July 7, 2017. This is the first interview being conducted by Pleasant Broadnax.

MR. BROADNAX: Mr. Jessamy is a prominent lawyer in the District of Columbia. He is past president of the Washington Bar Association and was inducted into the Washington Bar Association's Hall of Fame. Mr. Jessamy has served on the Executive Committee of the Council for Court Excellence and as chair of that organization's Nominations Committee for several years. In 2011, he was recognized for his leadership in connection with that organization with the award of the Charles A. Horsky Plaque. He was the recipient of the Washington Bar Association's prestigious Ollie May Cooper Award in 2013. He was inducted into the Washington Bar Association's Hall of Fame in June, 2014. Mr. Jessamy, let's start at the beginning. Tell us about your early life.

MR. JESSAMY: Very well. Good morning, Mr. Broadnax. Good to be here. Well, I was born in Yonkers, New York. I was the second son of my parents. I have a twin brother, and I had a younger brother who, unfortunately, died as a result of a hit-and-run car accident in 1981. My early years, I remember my parents divorced. My mother took custody of my brothers and I. We lived in a housing project in Yonkers. And when you think of housing projects nowadays, it is a drastic, drastic difference between where we

lived. We lived in projects that were comparable to just garden-type apartments, but that doesn't appear to be the case today.

MR. BROADNAX: What year was this?

MR. JESSAMY: This would have been about 1953 and all the way up to about 1957. Then my mother did remarry. She had a couple of daughters. They are living North Carolina. My father had another family, and there are three children in that family. There were three children. One of my younger brothers passed away this last year. And then my mother became sick, and she spent some time in the hospital. My brothers and I, that is, the brothers where we had the same mother and same father, ended up in foster care. Foster care is not the same as it is today. My older brother had already gone off to college, so he was not a ward of the state, as they say. But that was a pretty interesting life.

MR. BROADNAX: Where did your father work?

MR. JESSAMY: My father worked at Otis Elevator Company in Yonkers, New York. In fact, Otis was one of the larger employers in the city. I believe my mother worked there one time as a secretary. I know my father's father worked there. And so it provided a pretty good source of employment for a number of the residents of Yonkers, and, probably, throughout Westchester County, New York, as well.

MR. BROADNAX: When your father had another family, would you see him frequently?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. Every other week he would be exercising his visitation rights. He would either pick us up from our house or pick us up from Sunday School

and take us out with him on Saturdays, either out to his house or other relatives' houses and the like. There was hardly any separation between my father and myself and my brothers at all. It was a pretty interesting situation.

MR. BROADNAX: Could you tell us about your foster parents?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. They were sent from heaven. They had to be. They were extra special. They took care of foster children for years and years. Probably throughout their lifetime they had cared for about thirty. They took a particular interest in me and my brothers, and throughout school they followed my activities. I remember one time I was on a program speaking in City Hall one evening and my foster father worked for the Postal Service. That means he got off quite early, but he and my foster mother came to the program, and I was speaking, and he was asleep and he was snoring so the Council Chambers were rumbling. But I was not the least bit embarrassed. I was very, very happy that he was there to support me.

MR. BROADNAX: Do you remember what you were speaking on?

MR. JESSAMY: No. I was in a lot of programs when I was in junior high school and high school. It probably had something to do with community involvement. That was the nature of the program that I was in. I had a number of opportunities as a young student leader to go around and speak and make presentations of that nature.

MR. BROADNAX: Tell us about your foster parents. What were their names? What did they do for a living? And tell us about these other children that were foster

children. Were they there at the same time you were? Were they before you, after you?

MR. JESSAMY: Well not all thirty of them were there at the same time, that's for sure. But they had what in modern days is called a blended family. They had children of their own, two daughters, and then when they took me, my twin brother, and my younger brother in, that added a number of other siblings in the household.

Then, Mrs. Morgan did not work outside the home. In those days, the Welfare Department required one of the parents to be on duty, at home, all the time. Now, Mr. Morgan, as I indicated earlier, worked for the United States Postal Service. In addition to that, he was quite involved in the church. He was superintendent of the Sunday School, he was Chairman of the Trustee Board, he eventually became a pastor, but that was after I had already left for college. But I do remember that every Sunday all of the children in the house had to come down to the kitchen and we had to have breakfast together. Breakfast would start out with each child having to recite a Bible verse, and one individual would be designated to give the prayer. And then, we would eat, and it was quite a substantial breakfast. And we'd go get ready so we can pile in the car and he would drive us from New Rochelle, New York, at that time, to Yonkers where his church was.

MR. BROADNAX: Let me ask you this. You said he was superintendent of the Sunday School. Were there any opportunities for public speaking at Sunday School with poems or prayers, that sort of thing?

MR. JESSAMY: Oh, yes. You know, one thing that I bemoan the fact of now is that a lot of children do not participate in Sunday School-type activities. It was in Sunday School where they would have plays and pageants throughout the year, depending upon the season that you were in, whether it was Eastertime, or Christmastime, or what have you. So, I always tell people that, probably, my earliest thought in participating in things came through the Sunday School.

MR. BROADNAX: Mr. Jessamy, what experience did you gain from speaking in Sunday School? What life lessons did you learn?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, it was, I would say, a confidence-builder to be able to stand in front of a congregation or an audience. Just to say "good morning" was a confidence-builder. And in discussions with other people, I bemoan the fact that a lot of young people do not participate regularly in a Sunday School-type environment. Not only are there plays and pageants centered around the various holidays and Christian celebrations, but there are community-related matters. There are things that you would do that you didn't get a chance to do when you're in school. I went to integrated school environment. But being integrated, it meant that you were not a full participant. Well, Sunday mornings, Saturday afternoons at rehearsals

and all, you got a chance to be a full participant and do things that you were not called upon to do in your regular educational environment.

MR. BROADNAX: So you had an opportunity to develop confidence and speaking skills at Sunday School that you may not have had an opportunity to develop at the integrated schools?

MR. JESSAMY: That is exactly correct, and I speak about that often. A lot of times when I'm out public speaking and talking to the youth groups, I always encourage them to, if they don't go to Sunday School or Church, to get into some sort of program, a toastmasters program, a community group that advocates for children or young people, just so they get that exposure.

MR. BROADNAX: Was this experience in Yonkers, New York, or in New Rochelle, New York?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, both places. When I first moved into the foster home, Mr. and Mrs. Morgan – and I will give you their first names, Mr. Edward Morgan and Mrs. Catherine Morgan – lived in Yonkers. A couple months later, they had bought a house in New Rochelle, New York, which we moved into, but Mr. Morgan's church was in Yonkers so we continued to go down to Yonkers to go to church. Well, after I became a teenager, we were able to, basically, be freed from that obligation with Mr. Morgan, but what I did, and actually, one of my brothers too, we went to find a church in New Rochelle of the same denomination.

MR. BROADNAX: What denomination is that?

MR. JESSAMY: That is the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. I participated fully in Sunday School, fully in church and all the other programs that they had available for young people. I was not the least bit embarrassed. In fact, it provided some good, social interaction with people on most Sunday afternoons. Our church, or Sunday School, or some club would be invited to some program at another church. We would go to various places throughout the county and meet other young people of a similar age, interact with them, and there are some people now that I've become life-long friends with from that experience.

MR. BROADNAX: Let's turn our attention now to your formal schooling in junior high and high school. Could you tell us something about that?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes, Mr. Broadnax. I went to junior high school and high school in New Rochelle, New York. I had been probably not very active in junior high school, but when I got to high school, I did participate in a number of organizations, became the head of a number of organizations, and also turned my attention to a lot of civil rights matters.

MR. BROADNAX: What year was this?

MR. JESSAMY: I was in high school from 1963 to 1966. At one time I had become chairman of the Westchester County Youth Division of the Congress of Racial Equality. That was not a program sponsored by the school, that was outside of the school. In school, I had been president of an organization called the Michael Schwerner Post. Now, Michael Schwerner was one of the three civil rights workers who were found in a

ditch in Mississippi, and the reason why the organization was called the Michael Schwerner Post is because Michael Schwerner's mother was a teacher at New Rochelle High School. What we would do is go around in neighborhoods, collect care packages to send them down South with the Freedom Riders for distribution to the population that they were working with in Mississippi.

I had also been a part of the student government, I guess it was called Student Council. I had worked outside of school with another project called Paycheck. That was an organization that was designed to take young, probably underserved, youngsters, teach them about entrepreneurialship and ran a parking lot, a snack bar at the marina, we sold American flags. At one time during the drought, we sold water for people to be able to water their lawns. But that was quite an experience. And, in fact, I stayed with Paycheck until I graduated from high school, and I got a scholarship from Paycheck during my first semester at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

MR. BROADNAX: You graduated from high school what year?

MR. JESSAMY: I graduated in 1966.

MR. BROADNAX: So in 1963 you were in high school during the March on Washington, and you mentioned putting together care packages and food for the Freedom Riders down South. Did you know anyone who could have been a Freedom Rider from your area?

MR. JESSAMY: The one person that comes to mind most prominently is a gentleman by the name of Drew S. Days III. Now, Drew had quite a storied history. He worked as a civil rights attorney, he worked as an Assistant Attorney General under the Bill Clinton Administration, and he was, I believe, a Solicitor General in President Jimmy Carter's Administration. And after he finished that post, he went back to Yale University to teach at its law school.

MR. BROADNAX: So he was a Freedom Rider?

MR. JESSAMY: I believe he was. And that would have been consistent with the style of activities that he was involved in back in the 1960s. Drew is older than I am by a couple years, and actually, I looked up to him for leadership. I remember at one time during the World's Fair in New York, he was one of the individuals who was training those of us who participated in civil disobedience during the course of the World's Fair. And when I said training us, he was training us how to shield ourselves from batons. People would be kicking at you and spitting on you, and it was essential that you didn't retaliate because non-violence was the order of the day.

MR. BROADNAX: This was the 1965 World's Fair in New York?

MR. JESSAMY: 1964-1965 World's Fair, yes. I remember going out there, I remember sitting on escalators, having people just go up and down and swing their legs and kick you in your head, and the like. It was quite an experience.

MR. BROADNAX: These were civil rights demonstrations?

MR. JESSAMY: They were the civil rights demonstrations, to bring attention of the plight of African Americans in this country. I think the civil rights leadership thought that the World's Fair would make a perfect, perfect setting.

MR. BROADNAX: So, let me ask you about 1963. You were in high school, and I'm sure there were people your age that may have come to Washington from around the country for the March on Washington. Did you have an opportunity to participate in that?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, actually, I did not. My brothers and I had paper routes in New Rochelle, New York, and had I gone to the March on Washington, which I was tempted to do, I would have missed delivering papers, and I don't think that would have been a very good thing. So I sat around the radio and television and watched it from afar.

MR. BROADNAX: What kind of impact did that have on you, watching that and listening to it?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, of course, as I said previously I was yearning to be there, but I was quite, quite, quite swallowed up with pride watching those number of people, a quarter million people, coming to Washington to demonstrate jobs, housing, employment, and for it to have unfolded in the fashion that it did, I believe, I believe today, and I believed back in 1963, that it was a wonderful thing.

MR. BROADNAX: Okay, well, let's talk about your journey towards college. I think you attended Howard University. Could you tell us a little bit about how that came to be?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. I went to Howard University as an undergraduate student. In fact, during my years of contemplating college, I never thought of any school other than Howard University. I had read newspapers, magazines quite regularly, and it seems like anybody from our community, and when I say our community, I mean people of color, who were doing anything that was noteworthy, had some connection to Howard, either as a student, a professor, an administrator, or what have you, and I was quite taken in by that fact that, boy, if you're going to do anything or be anybody, you have to go to Howard. And I really thought that, and it seems like that mantra is still ruling the day now.

MR. BROADNAX: Do you have anyone else in your family who attended Howard before you?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. I have an older brother who started Howard in 1958. But, actually, he stayed out a couple years after that when my mother was sick, but he went back to Howard after she passed. In addition to my older brother having gone to Howard, my twin brother joined me at Howard. We both applied for Howard in the spring of 1966. He got accepted initially, and I got on the waitlist. I was pretty torn up about that. Not the fact that he got accepted and I got on the waitlist. I had hoped that I would have gotten an immediate acceptance as well, but I didn't.

MR. BROADNAX: Well, let me ask you, of the twins, who's older?

MR. JESSAMY: I am by six minutes. We have a story about that.

MR. BROADNAX: Do you want to tell me?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, the story is that we got in a fight to see which one was going to be out first, and I knocked him out and I came out first. His version of the story is, it was getting crowded in there and he kicked me out. So, we laugh about that from time to time. And, so, like myself, he was familiar with a lot of the publications that I was reading, and he had noted the same thing that I noted, that if you were going to be anything or be somebody that you had to go to Howard. To even get a chance at being somebody. Well, that's not wholly true, because there are a number of individuals that litter the landscape from a number of other colleges and universities that have done quite well, but as a Howard graduate, I like to think that is true.

MR. BROADNAX: The real HU?

MR. JESSAMY: The real HU.

MR. BROADNAX: So, when you got to Howard, was it all that you expected it to be?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, it was that and more. The first time I came to Howard was in the spring of 1966 to my older brother's graduation, and I got the chance to stay at his place, and he took my twin brother and I out with him to the various celebrations that the graduates were having, and it was an awesome, awesome, awesome experience. And then, when I got down to Howard, they have a period called Freshman Orientation, and during Freshman Orientation, I have never, ever seen or experienced as much – in those day the term they were using was 'soul'. We had, in addition to meaningful orientation, we had social orientation as well. I remember a

boat ride, I remember a cookout at campus, I remember looking around and seeing all these lovely ladies, which would get anybody's attention.

MR. BROADNAX: So, was this your first time seeing this many young African Americans in one place?

MR. JESSAMY: It was, it was. And not only that, but I told you, I think I mentioned, I went to an integrated school system when I lived in Yonkers, when I moved to New Rochelle, so through elementary school, junior high school, and high school, there were very few persons of color that were either in counseling or in the instructional phase of education, or in the administrative phase of education. I'm not saying they were totally lacking, but when I came to Howard, the mixture was actually reversed. There were more people of color in the administration, there were more people of color in the classrooms, there were more people of color in the counseling activities. And actually that was such a uplifting experience and exposure for me.

MR. BROADNAX: Nurturing.

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. Very nurturing. A lot of people ask what's the need for – the term is HBCUs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities – but having gone through that experience, it gave me a sense that there is a need for them. It will put people in a position of knowing that people from your community are just as smart, just as committed to your well-being and education, which was almost totally absent in the school systems that I had gone to.

MR. BROADNAX: I know by looking at some materials about you, Mr. Jessamy, or may I call you Ron?

MR. JESSAMY: Sure. That's what my mother named me.

MR. BROADNAX: You were pretty active in high school in a number of organizations, and a lot of those organizations you ended up leading, so when you got to Howard, did you continue joining organizations like that?

MR. JESSAMY: No, I didn't. Actually, I wanted to take a break from leadership, which is not what the college experience is supposed to be. So I only joined one or two organizations while I was in undergraduate school. My major was government. They didn't have a political science department like they do now, but they did have a political science society or club, so I was a vice president of that. And then there was one other organization that escapes me now that I ended up heading or what have you. But I took a break.

MR. BROADNAX: So you came to Howard in 1966, and you were a political science major.

MR. JESSAMY: No. I was a government major. They didn't have political science at that time, but a lot of people used government and political science interchangeably anyway.

MR. BROADNAX: And your brother was there at the same time?

MR. JESSAMY: My twin brother was there at the same time. He was a business major.

MR. BROADNAX: Did you see a lot of each other there?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. We lived in the same dorm, and then when we moved off campus, we were roommates, until we graduated and he went to graduate school up

at the University of Michigan and I stayed here to go to the George Washington University Law School.

MR. BROADNAX: Ron, before we get to law school, let's just talk a little bit more about college. I know you have mentioned you came from New Rochelle, and your family were employed there by the Otis Elevator Company. I want to know how did you and your brother, how were you both able to pay for your education at Howard University?

MR. JESSAMY: Well that's an interesting question. I had some good fortune. One, the first year I went to Howard, the day before I was leaving for college, my foster mother had gotten a loan from the bank to help support me for a portion of the first year. But as happenstance would have it, she was hospitalized. But the transaction still took place because Mr. Morgan went to the bank and secured the funds that she had already applied for. Then when I got to campus, I got a message to come up to the President of the University's office. I was stunned. Come to the University President's office? I'm only on campus for a couple of days. So I went. A ceremony took place in that office. I had been awarded a scholarship for this program that I had mentioned earlier called Paycheck. The founder of the program had come down from New York and presented me with a check, so I used that for tuition and the like. And then during the course of the second semester, my older brother took me to the library at the School of Engineering and Architecture and introduced me to the librarian and assistant librarian. He had worked there for a number of

years when he was in school, and he asked them to give me a job, and they did. So I got a job at the Engineering and Architecture Library. And that's why when I walk around Washington D.C. now and see a lot of students, they think I am either an engineer or an architect, but I'm neither. I worked in the library. And then I remember even keeping the job at the library, which I had evening hours. I had gotten a job at a haberdashery on Georgia Avenue, N.W. I was what was called a porter. A porter would be someone who would clean up the debris from the floor in the store, clean up the bathrooms and the like. But I lost that job because during the riots of 1968, that was one of the establishments that was burned down. The owner did probably restore it, but I did not go back there to work. Then, in 1969, I was fortunate enough to get a job at *The Washington Post* newspaper.

MR. BROADNAX: What did you do at *The Washington Post*?

MR. JESSAMY: I worked in the accounting department. The interesting thing about that is that the year before I got that job, I took Accounting 1 and Accounting 2, and my first assignment was to balance some numbers on a page. Back in those days they didn't have computers, they had these green sheets that you wrote on. And I remember staying up all night trying to find one penny or two cents. So, when the gentleman gave me the assignment and the columns balanced, I got scared because I thought I did something wrong. So I went back to campus, and I told the professor that I had for Accounting 1 and Accounting 2, I said, "Mr. Smith, something happened.

They gave me some sheets to balance and they balanced." And he said "Well, that's when you want them to. When you're getting paid to do it." So, I remember that to this very day.

MR. BROADNAX: Tell me more about your job at *The Washington Post*. How long were you working there?

MR. JESSAMY: I worked at *The Washington Post* from 1969 until 1973. I worked there in undergraduate and in law school. It was a dream job. It paid well for a student job, I got benefits such as sick leave, retirement, and vacation, which was basically unheard of for a part-time job. I also had a situation where I could make my own hours. I didn't have anybody supervising me. I knew what needed to be done and I did what had to be done. So, interestingly enough though, when I graduated from law school, I asked one of the officers in the company about a job in the legal department, which I had assumed they had, but the gentleman told me, "Well, we don't have a legal department, we have a lawyer or what have you." So I was pretty discouraged that I was not offered a professional employment opportunity.

MR. BROADNAX: When you had been there so long.

MR. JESSAMY: Those number of years, in my mind, weren't long. There were people who worked at *The Post* forever and a day. But most of the people who were there back in those days are retired now. I bump into one or two every so often in the street, and we laugh and joke about the days.

MR. BROADNAX: Ron, did you have any other jobs during college?

MR. JESSAMY: No. I think I gave you the gamut of the employment that I had in college, but I tell you I did have one interesting experience. My twin brother, who I mentioned was in college at the same time I was, worked at a shoe store on F Street, N.W. One year, I was a little short when it came time to pay tuition and fees, so the gentleman that he had worked for at the shoe store had introduced him into stocks, as in financial stocks in the stock market, and so he started accumulating some shares. But, what he agreed to do was to sell some of those shares to help me get over that little financial bind that I was in, and boy, was I grateful.

MR. BROADNAX: So, your brother, who was younger than you by six minutes, helped you pay for part of your college education?

MR. JESSAMY: He did.

MR. BROADNAX: Does he still talk about that with you to this day?

MR. JESSAMY: No. As a matter of fact he had forgotten about that situation except for I was being interviewed once on a nationally syndicated talk show, and the interviewer asked me about how I financed my education, and I had to mention that. This was quite a few years ago that that interview took place, and my brother had forgotten about it until he watched the interview.

MR. BROADNAX: This was between 1966 and 1970. The Vietnam War was active during that period of time.

MR. JESSAMY: Raging.

MR. BROADNAX: So, did the Vietnam War affect you at all?

MR. JESSAMY: It did.

MR. BROADNAX: Could you tell us how?

MR. JESSAMY: Sure. When I was in college, the first two years of college required male students at Howard University to enroll in ROTC. Then, at the end of the third semester, I took an examination for the advanced corps of ROTC. Well, it turns out that Howard had abandoned requiring students to take ROTC, so I stopped. They had a draft lottery some months later, and I happened to get a very low number. And having a low number means that you are very likely to be called. Well, as it turned out, the deferments for college students had ended. It used to be when I first started college that you were deferred until such time as you finish. But now, you're only deferred to the end of the session that you're enrolled in. Well I got a letter from my draft board saying, "Greetings, you are hereby inducted into the United States Army and report to such and such a place."

MR. BROADNAX: What session were you in?

MR. JESSAMY: I was in summer session. I finished undergraduate school in the summertime. So I went to my draft board, and I spoke to a lady who apparently ran the office, probably ran the whole board, and she recognized the fact that even though I was in summer school, the summer session was not over. I went to the first session, and the second session wasn't over. So she canceled my orders and told me that I should be drilling with some reserve unit or some other type of military service. I camped on the steps of the professor of Military Science to try to see if I

could get an audience with him, but he was away at summer camp with the cadets. Well, when he came back, I did speak with him. He did give me the opportunity to come in to the advanced portion of ROTC, and he told me that, for the semester that I didn't take the basic corps course, that I could write a paper.

So, I did go into ROTC. I was what they called a "cross-enrolled student" because they did not have ROTC at the law school that I was going to. I took tests, picked up my stipend every month. I did not go on any field training exercise, but I did do quite well when I went to summer camp. I got commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Army at the end of summer camp in, I believe it was, 1972.

MR. BROADNAX: So you were a first year in law school at George Washington University and training at Howard University at the same time?

MR. JESSAMY: That's correct.

MR. BROADNAX: You've told us how you paid for your education at Howard University. How were you able to pay for your legal education at the George Washington University?

MR. JESSAMY: I ran into a stroke of good luck. It turns out when I applied to law school, there was a move afoot to increase the number of people of color within the various universities, and George Washington University was no exception. So I got, for three years, what is known as tuition remission. I didn't have to pay for tuition for three years of my law school education. And, in fact, to put a cherry on top of that, I got a money grant to purchase

books for the first two years that I was in law school. So, on one hand, somebody might say that I stole the education, but I didn't. It turned out that I became aware of the fact that the presidential administration at that time had decided that a high amount of money in research grants were being given to universities, and if they wanted to continue to compete for those grants and receive those grants, they had to bring in more people of color. So that put a couple more chairs in the classroom and in return, I got a legal education.

MR. BROADNAX: So, Ron, you talked about some of the jobs you had when you were putting yourself through Howard University. Did you maintain any of those jobs while you were at the law school?

MR. JESSAMY: I did. I had continued to work evenings at the Engineering and Architecture Library on Howard University's campus. I continued to work at *The Washington Post* newspaper company, both summer and evening and weekends. Those were the two main sources of employment I had. Now, one summer I did work at a legal clinic at George Washington University.

MR. BROADNAX: Which summer was that?

MR. JESSAMY: If memory serves me correctly, that would have been the summer of 1971. I remember that summer because, actually, I got interviewed for a job with a United States senator, and the United States senator sent somebody to George Washington University to interview me. They offered me a job, but there was some type of misunderstanding on my part. They wanted

me to go to New York and work for the summer, and I told them I could not do that because I had living expenses here in the District of Columbia. So I respectfully declined the job, and I got hired on at the legal clinic at George Washington University, which at that time was being headed by an individual by the name of Mr. Willie Leftwich. Now Mr. Leftwich had been a Howard undergraduate, a law school graduate of George Washington University, and I believe he has a master's from George Washington University. He and a gentleman named James L. Hudson had started a practice of their own about that time. So I had the opportunity to work with them in their practice during the summer and during the school year as well.

MR. BROADNAX: What type of work did you perform?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, legal research. Anything that was needed to help buttress whatever argument they needed to make on cases they were going to court on. I helped in their preparation of witnesses for depositions. I did all duties as assigned. And that's what you did when you were a lowly law student. Learning the ropes.

MR. BROADNAX: What sort of practice did Mr. Leftwich and Mr. Hudson have? They were obviously older than you. Had they established themselves in any particular type of practice?

MR. JESSAMY: No. They were just starting their practice off. They did routine cases. It's probably more accurate for me to describe what they did not do than what they did do. But without being facetious, though, they did domestic

relations cases, contract cases that were in litigation, housing cases that were in litigation. And as the practice began to age, if you will, they took on a number of cases that actually turned out to be pretty groundbreaking. I do remember one case being related to the Pullman Porters. Pullman Porters were a group of black individuals who worked for the Pullman Company. They worked in a capacity as a porter, as opposed to being a train conductor. And when the train was devoid of individuals who could actually serve in the role of conductor, they would call upon the black guys to do it, but they would never call them conductors. They would be what they would call Porter-in-Charge. So anyway, there was a case out in Colorado which the Leftwich firm became of counsel to. And we litigated that case. I say we, that case started when I was in law school working with those guys. By the time it came to trial, I was an attorney, and I did actually present some witnesses at the trial.

MR. BROADNAX: So you were an attorney with the Leftwich firm at that time?

MR. JESSAMY: At the time that it came to trial. The Leftwich firm did not have any criminal cases. We did not do any probate cases. We did not do any of the cases that related to juveniles or neglect or anything of that nature. But it was an eye-opening experience, and it gave me the sense that when I finished law school that I wanted to join up with these guys and try to do what they were trying to do. They established their law firm. Leftwich had stopped working over at the legal clinic after two or three years over

there. But those guys were starting to make a name for themselves, and so, I wanted to sign on with them.

MR. BROADNAX: In deciding what career path you wanted to take, were there any other firms or did you have an opportunity to interview with any other lawyers?

MR. JESSAMY: No. I did not. I had a military obligation that I had to fulfill, and my sense was that, at least in those days, individuals or companies or in-house counsel or law firms were not willing to interview a person that they thought would have to interrupt their training in the law firm or in the in-house counsel position, so I did not interview with anybody. I never had one job interview in the legal profession. I've only discussed future employment with the Hudson, Leftwich and Davenport firm.

MR. BROADNAX: So, Ron, how long did you stay with the Hudson, Leftwich and Davenport firm?

MR. JESSAMY: I stayed with the Hudson, Leftwich and Davenport firm until 1984 when a couple of us left to form a firm of our own. So that means I was with that group from the time before I graduated from law school up until 1984.

MR. BROADNAX: What are some of the more memorable moments you have of working with William Leftwich and the Hudson firm?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, over that period of time there are many, many, many, probably too numerous for me to discuss. But I'll give you a couple highlights. One, I do recall the day that I was sworn into the District of Columbia Bar on June 7, 1974. The firm was in a trial at the U.S. District Court before Judge Oliver Gasch. After the swearing-in ceremony, I walked over to the

courtroom, and Willie Leftwich, who was one of the attorneys in trial, begged the court's indulgence, asked Judge Gasch whether or not he could present me to the court, which he did. Judge Gasch welcomed me into the profession, even though I wouldn't be admitted at the U.S. District Court at that moment, and he wished me well. That was quite a memorable experience. Judge Gasch was such a kind and gracious individual, and I've had several trials with him over the years.

Another memory I have is that we had a case in the United States District Court, a discrimination case, a black stockbroker who claimed discrimination. We tried the case, we lost at trial, we went to the Court of Appeals, we won the case at the Court of Appeals. But the interesting thing about that case is that the plaintiff had no damages. It turned out, that when he was dismissed from the stockbrokers' company, he went to Harvard Business School to get a master's degree. He came out, he got a job somewhere, and as it turned out the amount of money he made on his new career path eclipsed any amount of money that he would have made at the stockbrokerage firm. So, the firm was awarded attorney fees, and I believe he got a nominal payment that was negotiated between the firm and him.

MR. BROADNAX: And that was in the District Court for the District of Columbia?

MR. JESSAMY: That was in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

MR. BROADNAX: Was the Leftwich firm involved in that case?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes, very much involved. And that was a case of first impressions, so to speak. Usually, back in those days, employment discrimination cases were brought by people in the trades and not in the professions. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, this was the first or one of the very first cases where a professional individual sued for employment discrimination.

MR. BROADNAX: What would you say the primary focus of the firm was? Was it litigation, or, Mr. Leftwich, for instance, what was his focus in building lawyers with the firm?

MR. JESSAMY: Well, Mr. Leftwich was a former military guy. He was always ready to train young lawyers to go to bat. His position was that you have to have a cadre of young lawyers capable of going up against any of the other best lawyers in the city. He spent a considerable amount of time recruiting young people. He spent a considerable amount of time, and the firm spent a considerable amount of money, in training the lawyers. He would not do anything that would hurt the firm, he would not do anything that would hurt the client, he would not do anything that would hurt the attorney, but he was insistent on getting the type of experience for his young attorneys that would mold them into capable litigators.

The other lawyers, the other partners, had their own focus. Mr. Hudson was an attorney who did something that was groundbreaking for the firm. He became bond counsel for the city of Washington D.C. in the early days. And it was unheard for a firm of color to be bond counsel back in those days. He also developed a practice of representing

institutions and municipalities in Washington D.C. as becoming Washington Counsel, which meant interfacing with the White House and the Hill. I remember our firm became Washington Counsel for the City of Detroit, the City of Kansas City, the City of New Orleans. Now, interestingly enough, most of those cities when we became bond counsel, had elections that elected people of color to become mayors of their various cities. And so it became a new time for lawyers of color in this country, and this firm was on the leading edge of that happening.

Mr. Davenport, he had his own set of priorities and all, and he was mainly in the investment side of things, and he created a practice that developed an area where blacks were involved in building major financial enterprises in order to compete out here in the greater society. So the sum total of what Willie Leftwich had, what Jim Hudson had, what Chester Davenport had, when you put them together, the sum total of them represented a new day and age for firms of color.

MR. BROADNAX: Let's stop for a minute.

So, Ron, after your work with Hudson, Leftwich and Davenport, did you set up your own firm?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes, I did. There was a situation that developed at the Hudson, Leftwich, Davenport firm where several of us decided that we would try to strike out on our own. My law partner, Joanne Doddy Fort, myself, and a gentleman by the name of Frederick Douglas, we created a firm called Jessamy, Douglas, and Fort. We opened our office in August, I believe, of 1984.

Then, the firm changed somewhat. Mr. Douglas went back to practice with Mr. Leftwich, and a gentleman named Charles Ogletree, who was the star litigator at the District of Columbia Public Defenders Service, decided to join us. And he did. So, with the proviso that he could continue to teach as an adjunct at Harvard University. So the firm became Jessamy, Fort and Ogletree.

Then shortly thereafter, a gentleman from Maryland named Samuel Botts joined our firm, and we opened an office in Maryland at that time. And the firm became Jessamy, Fort, Ogletree, and Botts. Now, Mr. Ogletree got on a track to become a tenured professor at the Harvard Law School. When he went on that track, the law school told him that he could not maintain a partnership in a law firm and a tenured position on the law school faculty, so he converted his partnership status to an of counsel position with the firm. That's one of those situations that Mr. Ogletree looked into and discovered that there was precedent for such relationships. We're talking about some time ago, while it would probably not even raise an eyebrow at this point in time.

MR. BROADNAX: What year was this that you started your own firm?

MR. JESSAMY: 1984. And by the time it got into being Jessamy, Fort, Ogletree, and Botts, that was probably about 1986. We practiced very much the same type of work we did when Joanne, Fred Douglas, and myself were at Hudson, Leftwich and Davenport. Joanne and I did work before the D.C. Public Service Commission. I continued to do work that was assigned to

me by Aetna in the personal injury area. We had representation of a number of membership organizations where we served as, basically, outside general counsel. Fred Douglas, well, he left the firm so there is not that much to say about what his contribution was to the firm. It was a pretty nice set of circumstances. I think we grew to about maybe nine lawyers at one point. We had offices, as I mentioned, in Maryland and here in the District of Columbia.

MR. BROADNAX: Ron, obviously the Hudson, Leftwich and Davenport firm was the premier African American firm in Washington, D.C. during this time. Could you share with us any other groundbreaking matters in which the firm may have been involved as that trailblazing African American firm?

MR. JESSAMY: When you make reference to being the premier firm of color in Washington, D.C., as a former member of that firm, I'd like to think of it as being the premier firm of color in the country, but we won't go there.

There is, actually, one project that I had not mentioned in prior discussions. The Hudson, Leftwich and Davenport firm became the general counsel for something called the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project. That was a public works project that was developed under the presidency of Gerald Ford to improve the rail service between Washington, D.C. and Providence, Rhode Island. It was a huge undertaking. It started out being $1.9 billion. By the time it was over, it was over $2 billion. Up to that time, it strikes me that there were no firms of color that served in such a role. We were counsel to the project

manager, which consisted of two of the premier engineering construction firms in the country. One was, if memory serves me correct, the DeLeuw Cather firm, and the other was the Ralph Parsons Company. As it happened, when the legislation to get the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project under way it came about the Secretary of Transportation was a gentleman by the name of William T. Coleman. Secretary Coleman was a giant in the Civil Rights movement in the late 1940's, during the 1950's. He had served on the Board of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, and he was a Republican. But not the type of Republicans that we see today in 2017. What Secretary Coleman wanted to make sure of with this type of money flying around out there, that some of it went to people of color. He wanted to ensure that if there were set-asides, that the set-asides would be not only directed at the trades, but also be directed at the professions, accounting services, legal services, and the like. He had a lawyer on his staff by the name of Elaine Jones, who went over to the Hill and lobbied the congressmen and senators to ensure that the package, when it was passed by Congress, included a provision that the set-asides had to be for the professions as well as the trades. Not one or the other, but all inclusive. Elaine, as you probably know, went on to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and became quite prominent in the undertakings of that organization.

That was so magnificent that our firm got the opportunity to serve as the general counsel. The areas of practice included not only contract

law, construction law, environmental law, it just ran the gambit, and it gave the firm the opportunity to develop a cadre of lawyers. Not only black lawyers, but white lawyers as well. Some of that after the project was over left the firm and went on to practice prominently in the areas that they gained expertise in under the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project.

MR. BROADNAX: I know that you have been outside counsel for non-profit organizations such as the National Council of Negro Women, Blacks in Government, the Links, Incorporated, and the National Black Chamber of Commerce. Is there anything that you would like to share about your representation of any of those organizations?

MR. JESSAMY: I have served as outside counsel to those organizations, or at least my firm has. I have directly worked for Blacks in Government, which is known as BIG, and which is a national membership organization of people of color within the federal, state, and local jurisdictions. I've done work for the National Council of Negro Women, which actually I am pretty proud of having been a part of that organization's efforts as they were buying a building of their own. They purchased a building on Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest, midway between the White House and the Capitol. It's quite a handsome-looking building. I remember one time when the then-President, now deceased, Dr. Dorothy Height was having a conversation with a real estate broker who wanted to know why she had to have a building on Pennsylvania Avenue. Well, she recited a quote from

the founder of the National Council of Negro Women, Mary McLeod Bethune, who said that she wanted the woman to have a prominent place in the District of Columbia, and so Dr. Height looked over at me gleefully after they had closed on the building and said, "Do we have a proper place in the District of Columbia?"

MR. BROADNAX: And what did you say?

MR. JESSAMY: "By all means, Dr. Height." And then I did some work for the National Black Chamber of Commerce, which is an economic development engine within the African American community. Our firm – not me personally, but one of my former law partners, Joanne Doddy Fort, for a number of years served as outside general counsel for an organization called the Links, Incorporated, which is a social service group, and they had a building of their own on Massachusetts Avenue. Joann spent a lot of her time working on issues relating to that building.

In addition to those organizations, there are others that don't readily come to mind, but we've represented churches within the District of Columbia. The issues that we worked on with respect to churches usually involved governance or contracts or the lack thereof between the pastor and the church. The difficulty of doing church litigation is that those cases typically get tossed out by the local courts because there's something called the Constitution of the United States, something called the First Amendment. The courts do not like to entangle ecclesiastical matters with court-related matters. But by and large, the representation of

these organizations have given my practice and my current practice an opportunity to stay connected with the community. These are service-oriented enterprises, by and large. These are organizations consisting of people of color, by and large. And these are organizations that have been around for a number of years.

MR. BROADNAX: Looking at the materials, I've noticed that the Jessamy, Fort & Botts firmed combined with another firm, Jordan Keys. Could you tell us something about that merger?

MR. JESSAMY: Back probably around 1997 or so, my law partners, Joann Fort and Sam Botts, and I decided to combine our firm with a well-known and well-regarded firm of Jordan and Keys. They did insurance defense work, hospital defense work, and George Keys had a pretty substantial real estate and land use practice. That was interesting to me because I had done some real estate and land use matters in my other practice as well. So we joined together and formed a firm by the name of Jordan Keys and Jessamy. That went on for a number of years. It was interesting that there came a point in time when it seemed like a lot of people at the firm were looking for jobs. A couple people had an interest in being considered for a judge at the D.C. Superior Court level or a magistrate judge. I think one or two may have applied for other legal positions, so I asked why am I not looking? I decided at that point that I would leave the firm and practice on my own, which I did.

MR. BROADNAX: Was that around 2003?

MR. JESSAMY: That was 2003. Now here in 2017, I am practicing on my own. But it was an okay decision on my part. I didn't get the sense that the lawyers at the firm thought I was going anyplace, and when I left, I didn't leave in spite or anything of that nature. I left on good terms. They say the best time to leave is when you're not being pushed out, and I was definitely not being pushed out.

MR. BROADNAX: There's one thing I neglected to ask you about when you were still with Jessamy, Fort and Botts. There was a program that the American Bar Association sponsored called the Minority Council Demonstration Program, and I know your firm was involved with that program. Could you tell us a little something about that.

MR. JESSAMY: By all means. Actually, that's one of the more favorable aspects of the practice as I look back on it in those days. The American Bar Association program was designed to bring business opportunities to minority firms. The program would try to match up local firms with national organizations. The problem with being in the District of Columbia is that most national corporations do not have offices or manufacturing facilities in the District of Columbia save for public relations or government relations type offices, so we got very few opportunities to perform legal services for any of those companies. But what it did do for us is give us an opportunity to connect with firms across the country of similar size and similar outlooks. The firms within the project had varying degrees of success. Some grew and grew and grew. Others stayed basically the same

by way of number of employees and the like. But I do not discredit the American Bar Association for its Herculean efforts to bring economic opportunities to these smaller firms. The firms had been selected based upon their "likelihood of success" in a project such as this, which meant that most of the firms that were selected – and there were six – had already been doing work of some nature on a small-scale basis for clients who had needs similar to these firms that they were trying to match with. So that was one of the factors that they considered in determining whether the firm was going to be selected to participate in this project. The project also permitted the participants the opportunity to travel to various locations where they would hold seminars or give pointers on practice skills, get you introduced to some of the major corporations in the country, and so from that perspective, it was good. As I understand it now, the program has expanded to include not only minority law firms, but has expanded to include partners and associates of color in major firms. The thought was that in order for those individuals to succeed, they would have to bring something to the table. This was a way of giving them an opportunity to do so.

MR. JESSAMY: [There's a section missing here]

Of this nature, somebody ought to be around the table that looks like us. One of the examples I gave was that the Bar Association of the District of Columbia used to operate the law library that was in the U.S. District Court building, but blacks couldn't use it. There used to be a

black guy who ran the library who used to open it up at night time and let black lawyers come in and use the books. Here people qualified to be members of the Bar Association of the District of Columbia which was a voluntary bar association, but they couldn't join that. They couldn't use the law library. This guy died a couple years before, whenever my first interview was taking place, he died maybe a couple years before that. I say it's like folklore, since I wasn't around. You hear these stories, right.

Oral History of Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr.

Second Interview
April 30, 2018

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of The Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewer is Pleasant Broadnax, and the interviewee is Ronald C. Jessamy, Sr.. The interview took place in Mr. Jessamy's office on Monday, April 30, 2018. This is the second interview being conducted by Pleasant Broadnax.

MR. BROADNAX: Mr. Jessamy, good morning. I know that you have participated in a number of programs at the federal courthouse, and not just for matters related to your cases, but also on a volunteer basis with respect to certain groups. Could we talk about some of those. Let's begin with committees you may have been appointed to by the federal judges there.

MR. JESSAMY: Good morning, Mr. Broadnax. I've maintained a presence in the federal courthouse for matters other than just trying cases. I at one point had been selected for Merit Selection Panel of the reappointment of Magistrate Judge Alan Kay. In fact, I chaired that panel, and that was at the time that Judge Norma Holloway Johnson was the Chief Judge of that court. I got appointed by judges of the court to the Non-appropriated Funds Committee. The person who was spearheading that was a now-retired judge by the name of Henry Kennedy. The Non-appropriated Funds Committee would make recommendations to the Court for certain organizations and entities who made application to receive funds that ---- of the court but were not appropriated by any of the governing bodies. Then I go to the Courthouse for a number of the programs that are held

there. There are often programs held on the 6th floor in the Ceremonial Courtroom. Following that, there are receptions by various groups and organizations that I participate in. One most notably is the Council for Court Excellence, which has held its annual and semi-annual meetings in the Ceremonial Courtroom over a number of years. I mentioned the receptions in the annex of the federal courthouse. The annex is named after a giant of an individual by the name of Judge Bryant. I went there when they dedicated it. It was a source of great, great, great pride. He had so many individuals come out and pay homage to him and his memory. It was a feeling that I can't really describe.

MR. BROADNAX: In addition to being the chief judge of the D.C. U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia for a number of years, Judge Bryant also has been the recipient of a coveted award of a very important organization here in Washington, D.C., the Washington Bar Association. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

MR. JESSAMY: I don't know why you ask that question because we're going to end this transcription today, but yes, I'm very close to the Washington Bar Association. Back in 1976, the Washington Bar Association established what is called the Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit. Charles Hamilton Houston was one of the founders of the Washington Bar Association, and he was also the architect of destroying Jim Crow in the court through the use of the courts. Judge Bryant's background training and professional career were such that in 1977 he was awarded this very,

very coveted medallion, and I would say that almost all of the individuals, if not all of the individuals, have been known to have made their mark in the area of civil rights, and Judge Bryant certainly did that during the course of his practice in law, and he assured that the rights of individuals who appeared before him in the federal courthouse were honored, observed, and not trampled upon.

MR. BROADNAX: I understand it that among the members of the Washington Bar Association, Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion awardees are several members of the Federal Judiciary here in the District of Columbia. Could you tell us who some of them are?

MR. JESSAMY: I can, but before we get to the Federal Judiciary in Washington, D.C., there are several Supreme Court Justices who have received the coveted Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit from the Washington Bar Association, including the likes of the Honorable Thurgood Marshall, the Honorable William J. Brennan, Jr., and the Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg received her award in 2015. Justice Marshall received his award in 1976, and Justice Brennan received his award in 1987. Getting back to the D.C. Circuit, we have the award going to the Honorable Spottswood Robinson, who also received it in 1976 at the time that Thurgood Marshall and several other individuals received it. At the District Court level, we have the Honorable Joseph Waddy. We have the Honorable Aubrey Robinson, we have the Honorable John Garrett Penn, Norma Holloway Johnson, and most recently, we had the Honorable

Emmett G. Sullivan. So as you can see, there exists quite an array of individuals who have received this award. We take particular honor in recognizing these individuals, and we are happy that they accept because we want to hold them out, make them a part of the Washington Bar Association's history. Every individual that we had voted to receive the Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit from our organization has accepted. For that, we are grateful.

MR. BROADNAX: We have talked about the award that has been given by the Washington Bar Association. Let's talk a little bit about the Washington Bar Association and its inception and founding. Could you talk to us a little bit about how the Washington Bar Association came to be in existence?

MR. JESSAMY: This goes back quite a few years. The Washington Bar Association was established in 1925, but prior to the Washington Bar Association, there were other groups of African American lawyers who had come together to associate themselves for their own benefit, for their own protection, and for the advancement and advocacy for the community. That was because they were not permitted to join the Voluntary white bar associations. The Washington Bar Association was preceded by an organization called the Colored Bar Association, and apparently there was some sort of a split of mindset of individuals, and one of the founders, of course, was Charles Hamilton Houston, and who the medallion is named after. Charles Hamilton Houston, for those who don't know, had been credited for being the man who killed Jim Crow. That is, he had drafted the strategy of

pursuing litigation that would eventually lead to the dismantling of recognized de jure, I guess, of segregation in the field of education. It was initially thought that *Plessy v. Ferguson* that was decided in the 1890s was going to be the law that forever stood. Charles Hamilton Houston proved that wrong.

The interesting thing about Charles Houston is that he did not live long enough to see the Supreme Court rule against legalized segregation. However, the star pupil at the Howard Law School was a gentleman named Thurgood Marshall. Thurgood Marshall argued that case in the Supreme Court, which eventually led to the decision in 1954 that outlawed segregation. That decision set the groundwork for the dismantling of segregation in other areas – transportation, housing, and the like. So, when we honor people with this Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit, the Washington Bar Association is saying thank you, well done. We know we still have a lot of work to do, but we have great examples from whom we have learned and will continue to try to walk in their footsteps.

MR. BROADNAX: When did you first become involved with the Washington Bar Association?

MR. JESSAMY: I would say that was probably in the mid-1970s. I do recall attending every Law Day banquet from 1979 until the present time. I remember attending most Ollie May Cooper Award programs that began in 1979, and that is still a program that is carried on this very day.

MR. BROADNAX: Speaking of Ollie May Cooper, could you tell us who Ollie May Cooper is.

MR. JESSAMY: Ollie May Cooper was a lady who worked at the Howard University Law School. Ollie May Cooper was a lawyer herself. Ollie May Cooper is credited with creating the first female law practice, law firm, in the District of Columbia with another woman. But while she worked at Howard throughout the deanships of a number of individuals, she was known for looking out for the interests of those students. She was very generous of her own resources in helping students make tuition and fee payments. She was the glue, from what I understand, that kind of held that law school together for a number of years.

MR. BROADNAX: The Washington Bar Association inaugurated a program called the Ollie May Cooper Award Program.

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. That was done under the late Jay Clay Smith, Jr., who eventually became President of the Washington Bar Association. He wanted to recognize Ollie May Cooper for her efforts, and as I indicated, or should have indicated, that the first award of the Ollie May Cooper Award was given by the Washington Bar Association in 1979.

MR. BROADNAX: Do you have a particularly interesting story that you experienced around that time with respect to Ollie May Cooper?

MR. JESSAMY: Oh yes. Very much so.

MR. BROADNAX: Could you tell us about that?

MR. JESSAMY: The president of the Washington Bar Association at the time was Jay Clay Smith. He gave me an assignment. He asked me to go to the 1400 block of R Street here in the District of Columbia and pick up Ms. Cooper and to escort her to the program, the very first Ollie May Cooper program, and I took quite delight in receiving that assignment from Jay Clay Smith. It's what I sometimes call my own private window on history. Here I am driving Ms. Cooper to a program, and there's an award named after her. When I learned of her generosity and all the work that she had done at the Howard University Law School, I was literally in awe. She holds a very special place in my heart. Not because I happened to have received an Ollie May Cooper Award at one time, but because of her devotion and dedication to those students at the Howard University Law School, because of her devotion and dedication to the Deans that she had worked for at the Law School, and to the fact that she was a pioneering individual in her own right when she and a law partner established a practice of law in the District of Columbia.

MR. BROADNAX: You mentioned that you have received the Ollie May Cooper Award. What year was it that you received it?

MR. JESSAMY: If memory serves me correctly, it was probably 2013. I was quite honored. In fact, I did not make it to the meeting in which the nominations were received for individuals who received the award. The president of the Washington Bar Association at the time was a lawyer by the name of Billy Martin, and somebody, I don't know who, put my name

in for nomination, and I do recall Mr. Martin saying at the program, well that's what you get for missing a meeting. Anyway, I was quite honored, and I have that award prominently displayed on my credenza in my office.

MR. BROADNAX: Prior to receiving the award, Ron, you had actually served as the president of the Washington Bar Association. Was it from 2008 to 2010?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. Those two bar years, which go usually from September through June. That was a very interesting time in my professional career, and I took that responsibility as president very seriously. The Washington Bar Association was doing great things at that time. We had established a Judicial Council Division which involves the participation of members of the Judiciary in the District of Columbia, as well as members of the Administrative Law Judges here in the District of Columbia, and they are quite vibrant. They put on quite a few symposiums dealing with various issues, and those symposiums are very well-attended. We get tremendous support from the bench and from the Administrative Judges. There is a Young Lawyers division. Those young lawyers are quite something to behold. They get it done, if I can be a bit colloquial. They make themselves available to do many, many things in the community. In fact, just this past weekend they put on a health fair. Unfortunately I did not attend, but I've seen pictures and read some comments about how well it was.

MR. BROADNAX: One thing I forgot to ask you about as we were talking about the Law Day program. We are now in April of 2018, and in a few days, the Washington Bar Association will have another Law Day program. Is that correct?

MR. JESSAMY: That is correct.

MR. BROADNAX: Who will be the recipients of the Charles Hamilton Houston Award of Merit at the upcoming program?

MR. JESSAMY: There will be two recipients this year. One is Roger L. Gregory, who was a chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. The other recipient will be a lady by the name of Grace Speights. She is a global leader in the law firm Morgan Lewis.

MR. BROADNAX: You mentioned Chief Judge Gregory. Did Chief Judge Gregory also participate in the ABA program that you discussed earlier?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. If I may, I'll call him Roger because he and I became good friends through that program. Roger was a principal in a law firm in Richmond, Virginia, called Wilder & Gregory. Wilder is the former Governor of Virginia, and he is also a recipient of the Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit awarded by the Washington Bar Association. I recall going to Judge Gregory's investiture on becoming a judge on the Fourth Circuit. Two things I remember about that. One is that Governor Wilder was one of the individuals who delivered remarks, and in his remarks, Governor Wilder revealed the fact that all the time that he and Roger had been law partners, they never had a written partnership agreement between

them. I said, "Wow." That is trust. That is integrity. That is the individual that I became friends with by the name of Roger L. Gregory.

MR. BROADNAX: You have been a long-time participant and contributor to the Washington Bar Association. You've been involved with the Association as early as 1976. You served as the President of the Washington Bar Association from 2008 to 2010. You received the Ollie May Cooper Award from the Washington Bar Association in 2013. Here we are in 2018, and I think it's fair to say that you could be considered an elder statesman of the Washington Bar. In fact, you are also a member of the Washington Bar Association's Hall of Fame. Could you tell us a little about that?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. I am somewhat involved, even at my old age, with a number of activities of the Washington Bar Association. You asked about the Hall of Fame. The Washington Bar Association has what is known as its own hall of fame to recognize individuals who have made substantial contributions to the community and to the Washington Bar Association. So I am pleased and proud to have joined the ranks of a number of individuals who have also been inducted into our Hall of Fame. Talking about being an elder statesman, I remembered the time when I would go to meetings and I was one of the youngest persons around the table. Now I go to meetings, and I'm one of the oldest persons around the table. I have no problem whatsoever with being one of the older persons or, if we want to use the term that you use, elder statesmen.

MR. BROADNAX: One of the benefits of having served in an organization for such a long period of time in so many capacities and being recognized as a substantial contributor to an organization, you have a long-term view of things, Ron. How do you see the Washington Bar Association today and in the future?

MR. JESSAMY: I see the Washington Bar Association as continuing its aggressive, vibrant advocacy on behalf of the community it represents. I see the Washington Bar Association actually in this day and time more visible in the community. By way of example, just last year, the Washington Bar Association received the D.C. Bar's Voluntary Bar Association of the Year Award. That was the _____ award for the Bar Association that the D.C. Bar had given out. Last year, the Washington Bar Association received the designation of Affiliate of the Year by the National Bar Association. So by those standards, the Washington Bar Association is on the move. The Judicial Council Division continues its efforts in bringing programs to the membership and to the community at large. The Young Lawyers Division is active probably several times a month doing things in the community, putting on programs that benefit the community. There is a Law Students Division of the Washington Bar Association, and the Law Students Division is designed to help students focus on advocacy for the community, help focus on their potential career paths, and that has been growing, and there have been participants from several additional law schools when it first got started. So by and large, I am quite optimistic about the future and outlook of what the Washington Bar Association will

be doing in its role as an advocate for the community, in its role as an advocate for the by and large African American judges and attorneys in the District of Columbia.

MR. BROADNAX: I believe you have also served an organization called the Council for Court Excellence for a number of years. Could you tell us about your experience with that Council?

MR. JESSAMY: I have been associated with the Council for Court Excellence since at least 1989. The Council for Court Excellence is an organization consisting of attorneys, community members, judges, all for the improvement of matters at the courts. For instance, the Council for Court Excellence initiated the discussion papers that ended up in becoming a policy at the D.C. Superior Court called One Day, One Trial. That situation where when you call for jury service, if you do not get picked for trial on a date that you were down there, your jury service ends at the end of that day until, of course, the next time you call which is approximately two years later.

MR. BROADNAX: Before that, what was the policy?

MR. JESSAMY: The policy was you would get called for jury duty, you would have to stay on jury duty, that is, come to the court daily for I think I recall it was at least a two-week period of time, and you'd sit around a jury lounge, get called up from time to time to go to the various courtrooms. If you weren't picked, you got back to the jury lounge. But anyway, that is one of the major improvements in the judiciary during the years that I have been part of the Council for Court Excellence.

The Council also engages in jury education. The Council also has produced now two films that are played in the jury lounge to give jurors a sample of what to expect when they go to a courtroom. When I say several films, the second one was an update of the first one. There are a number of publications that the Council for Court Excellence has put out over the years. One that I remember most is the guide to what to expect in probate proceedings, and it's something that's pretty user friendly, and it's very educational. So they do a lot of policy analysis for various organizations and D.C. City Council as it relates to matters that have a bearing on the courts.

MR. BROADNAX: I think there was a period of time when you were on the Council for Court Excellence that you also served on the committee that you had mentioned earlier of the Non-Appropriated Funds Committee. I think you said you worked with Judge Kennedy on that committee. Was there an interesting occurrence when you were serving on both of those committees at the same time?

MR. JESSAMY: The Non-Appropriated Funds Committee at that time, and I don't know if that committee still exists, used funds that were accumulated by the court to make grants to community-based organizations, and it just so happens that one of the instances, the Council for Court Excellence had a request for a grant pending, so obviously being on the Council and being on the Non-Appropriated Funds Committee, I felt that it would obviously be a conflict for me to participate in awarding my own organization a grant, so

I recused myself and let other members of the committee make the decision. As it turned out, the Council for Court Excellence did receive the grant that it applied for, and as I think back on this thing now, the conflict would have been more egregious because I may have been on the executive committee of the Council for Court Excellence at that time.

MR. BROADNAX: Was there also a period of time in the mid-1980s that you became involved on a volunteer basis with the Greater Southeast Hospital?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. The Greater Southeast Community Hospital at that time was a 450-bed hospital in the Southeast quadrant of the District of Columbia. Prior to that time, a lot of people knew the hospital as Cafritz Memorial Hospital, but it did have a name change. At the time I became involved with the hospital, I took somewhat of a hiatus from participating in the Washington Bar Association because I tell you that hospital work, it was volunteer, but it seemed like a full-time job. I remember meetings at 7:30 in the morning. I remember meetings at night that went beyond 9:00. But there was a lot to be done. At that time, the hospital was actually one of the few hospitals in the District of Columbia that was making money. There had been structural changes in the corporate makeup of the hospital and its parent company and the like, but that came. The hospital isn't there anymore. Well, the hospital is there, but it's not known as the Greater Southeast Hospital, and it has been a struggling enterprise in recent years for people who read the local newspapers would know that. We were a Trauma One Center at the time that I was on the board. In fact,

the hospital made money those years, which I think I mentioned, while most hospitals in D.C. were not.

MR. BROADNAX: You've also been involved in an organization called the D.C. Martin Luther King Support Group. Could you discuss your involvement with that organization?

MR. JESSAMY: By all means. The Martin Luther King, Jr. D.C. Support Group is an organization that has been chartered by the Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta, Georgia. What that group does is put on programs to raise money to support the King Center in Atlanta. We provide scholarships annually. We have a luncheon annually on Dr. King's birthday. For about 25 years, I was Chairman of that group. One other thing that I failed to mention is that every April, around April 4, the date that Dr. King was assassinated, we put on a prayer breakfast, and that is something that is still occurring in this year, 2018. I actually enjoyed my work in that entity.

I had unfortunately not been able to come to the March on Washington when Dr. King gave his now-highly exalted, famous speech of "I Have A Dream," but I've always been interested in civil rights, civil rights organizations, civil rights litigation. So for me, it was a very comfortable fit. Even though I don't have as much involvement with that group now, at least for the 25 years that I chaired that organization, I had been pretty active.

MR. BROADNAX: There's also an organization named the Washington, D.C. Hall of Fame Society that you've been involved with. Could you tell us what that is, what that organization does, and your involvement.

MR. JESSAMY: That is an organization that had been formed in the District of Columbia in 2000 to honor and recognize the contributions of the many citizens who have made significant contributions and had an impact on life here in the city. We are gearing up for the 2020 20th reunion, and we have been told that we can have the names of the inductees put in a public space much like the Hall of Fame out in Los Angeles for actors. This one will be for people who have made contributions to the District of Columbia. And by way of example, some of the inductees we have at least two inductees in the category of law who had been members of the United States District Court bench here in the District of Columbia. One, of course, is Judge William B. Bryant. The other is Judge Norma Holloway Johnson. The categories in which the people are inducted into the Hall of Fame include business, cultural arts, communications, civic and community development, education, health, law, religion, science and technology, politics and government, sports. There's also a national award for which an individual does not have to be a resident of the District of Columbia but has attributed significantly to the quality of life in the District of Columbia. There is what is known as a Lifetime Achievement Award, and then there is a regional award. That award goes to individuals who live in the Washington region but do not reside in the District of Columbia.

There's something I need to correct. When I mentioned the title of the category for awards, I had mentioned in one instance what I had inadvertently said was a Lifetime Achievement award. I should have said Lifetime Legacy award. That award was given out only twice, and one was to a lady with whom I had worked closely with for about twenty years prior to her death, and that is Dr. Dorothy Irene Height.

MR. BROADNAX: When you referred to the Lifetime Legacy award only being given out twice, twice in what period of time?

MR. JESSAMY: Twice in the last eighteen years.

MR. BROADNAX: When you tell us that you have done some work with Dr. Height, could you expound upon your experience with Dr. Height?

MR. JESSAMY: We could be here for a day or two or more, but it was a wonderful experience working with Dr. Height, and an organization which she led was the National Council of Negro Women in the District of Columbia. Some of the more prominent matters that come to mind is when she was out exploring property to purchase as the area headquarters for the National Council of Negro Women, she related a story about a realtor had taken her around and shown her some properties, and she respectfully indicated that she wasn't quite interested in a property he showed her, and it turns out the property was on a side street, and the realtor said to her, "Well what's wrong with being on a side street?" Reportedly, Dr. Height said, "Well, do we look like side street people?" She had in mind that the founder of the National Council of Negro Women, Mary McLeod

Bethune, had said that she would like her people to have a prominent place in the nation's capital. The prominent place that Dr. Height had found for the National Council of Negro Women turns out to be on Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest. It is midway between the White House and the Capitol. Dr. Height had stated on a number of occasions, or at least posed the question, is this a prominent location in the nation's capital? The answer has to be it is.

MR. BROADNAX: Did you have any involvement in the purchase of the property located on Pennsylvania Avenue for the National Council of Negro Women?

MR. JESSAMY: Yes indeed. My firm served as counsel during the negotiations of the contract. My firm also was the location where the settlement took place. We were not the settlement attorneys, but the settlement people came to our building, to my office, to our conference room. The firm at the time was named Jessamy, Fort, Ogletree & Botts, and the deal was closed in my office. I take particular pride in it for several reasons. One, I believe in the mission of the National Council of Negro Women. I personally like and admire Dr. Height to the utmost degree, and I am just so proud that I had the opportunity to participate in a venture of that nature and magnitude.

MR. BROADNAX: To borrow your phrase when you were talking about your experience with Ms. Ollie May Cooper, you referred to your experience as your own little private window on history. Are there other experiences with Dr. Height

that you can share with us that might be considered your own little private window on history?

MR. JESSAMY: By all means. How much time do you have? Without being facetious, during the years that I've worked with Dr. Height, I travelled with her to various locations. I do recall one time before the property was purchased on Pennsylvania Avenue, Dr. Height, some of her staff members and myself traveled to North Carolina to the home of Dr. Maya Angelou who was very instrumental in trying to raise the funds for the National Council of Negro Women to buy the property. That was quite an experience. We sat in the kitchen of Dr. Angelou's house, and there was much talking going on, and much strategy being developed at times, and I'm saying I'm sitting here with these two giants of history, one at one head of the table, the other at the other end of the table. It was quite a large table, by the way, but there was room in the kitchen for staff to sit. There may not have been room for them to sit at the table, but there was room for them to sit. I will always treasure that experience.

There was another time I traveled with Dr. Height to Fredericksburg, Virginia, to the home of the general counsel of the National Council of Negro Women. The general counsel is a member of the executive committee of the National Council of Negro Women. The person we went to visit was a good friend of Dr. Height's whose name is Dovey Roundtree. Dovey Roundtree is quite a known figure in old Washington, I'll say. She had a law firm, and she had a number of cases

which had made the news. At the time that Dr. Height and I were visiting her, Ms. Roundtree must have been in her 80s. She's 100-and-some-odd years now. She's still alive and lives in a nursing home in North Carolina. She had a book published. She's legally blind at this time, but I understand that she is probably still in her right mind, to borrow a phrase from Dr. Height.

I've traveled to Dr. Height to other places. I know we went to a funeral in Detroit, Michigan, of a former executive of Ford Motor Company who was very instrumental in fundraising to raise the money to buy the building on Pennsylvania Avenue. So it was quite a delight.

MR. BROADNAX: You mentioned attorney Dovey Roundtree, and her history as an attorney here in D.C. intersects with one of the members of the District Court, Judge Joyce Hens Green.

MR. JESSAMY: Yes. As it has been recorded in oath, Ms. Roundtree's biography, and through other discussions that I've heard, Judge Joyce Hens Green was the sponsor of Ms. Roundtree to become a member of the Women's Bar Association here in the District of Columbia. Because Ms. Roundtree was of color, she was not allowed to be a member of the Women's Bar Association. Well, there was an effort back probably in the 1950s when Judge Joyce Hens Green, who also is a favorite person of mine, in fact, I used to have breakfast almost every morning with Judge Green and her husband Sam. Before he died while Judge Green was on the bench, her husband had a law practice in a building where the café was where we

would have breakfast. I'd always make a comment about when Judge Green would go up and get the coffee pot and fill our coffee cups with coffee, I said, "Only in America could a welfare kid like me have service by a United States District Court Judge." I actually treasure that relationship between myself and Judge Green and her husband. She is quite a phenomenal individual.

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Ronald C. Jessamy

Ronald C. Jessamy is an attorney who represents clients in civil litigation, administrative and regulatory proceedings and commercial and real estate transactions. For over forty (40) years, he has practiced before the local and federal courts in the District of Columbia and before local administrative agencies and commissions.

Mr. Jessamy began his legal career in 1974 as an associate with the firm of Hudson Leftwich and Davenport, where he practiced until 1984 when he left to form the firm of Jessamy Douglas & Fort (later, Jessamy Fort Ogletree & Botts). In 1998, Mr. Jessamy and his partners combined their practice with the highly regarded litigation and real estate firm of Jordan & Keys, LLP to create Jordan Keys Jessamy & Botts, LLP. In 2003, Mr. Jessamy established the Law Office of Ronald C. Jessamy, PLLC.

Mr. Jessamy has served as a hearing agent for the District of Columbia Public Service Commission and has provided services as special counsel to the District of Columbia City Council and the District of Columbia Board of Education. Mr. Jessamy has provided representation to such entities as insurance companies, accounting firms, an electric utility company, national oil companies, financial institutions, governmental agencies, health care organizations (hospitals, nursing homes and health maintenance organizations), nonprofit corporations, churches and a number of minority business enterprises.

Mr. Jessamy is an active participant in professional, business and civic activities in the District of Columbia. He is a graduate of the Leadership Washington program, and served on its board of directors from 1988 to 1991. He served on the board of directors of the former Greater Southeast Community Hospital, a 450-bed acute care hospital in the District of Columbia, from 1985 through 1991 and was its chair from 1986 to 1989. He served on the board of directors of Fort Washington (MD) Community Hospital, Stoddard Baptist Nursing Home, and the Economic Club of Washington. He was the chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. D.C. Support Group. He also served on the National Advisory Committee of The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation-Barbara Jordan Health Policy Scholars Program at Howard University.

Mr. Jessamy has been a voting delegate to the District of Columbia Judicial Conference for over 30 years and served as a member of the Committee on Arrangements for the Conference in 1998. He has been a guest of the District of Columbia Circuit Judicial Conference and has participated as a panelist at one of its sessions. In 1999, Mr. Jessamy was appointed by the judges of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia to chair the Merit Selection Panel for the Reappointment of Magistrate Judge Alan Kay and in 2010 the judges appointed him to become a member of that court's Non-Appropriated Funds Advisory Committee. He is a member of the American Bar Association and is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation. He is also a member of the National Bar Association and served on its Board of Governors as an affiliate representative from 2008 - 2009. He is a past president of the Washington Bar Association (2008 – 2010), an affiliate of the National Bar Association. He has also served on the District of Columbia Bar's Judicial Evaluation Committee. He was appointed by the District of Columbia Bar's Board of Governors to serve on its 2007-2008 Nominations Committee, on its 2008-2009 Screening Committee and on its Regulations/Rules/Board Procedures Committee from 2009-2011. Mr. Jessamy was also a member of the District of Columbia Conference on Opportunities for Minorities in the Legal Profession. He served on the executive committee of the Council for Court Excellence and as chair of that organization's nominations committee for several years. In 2011 he was recognized for his leadership in connection with that organization with the award of the Charles A. Horsky Plaque. He is a member of Sigma Delta Tau legal fraternity. He was the recipient of the Washington Bar Association's prestigious Ollie May Cooper Award in 2013. He was inducted into the Washington Bar Association's Hall of Fame in June 2014. He has been requested to contribute an oral history to the District of Columbia Circuit Historical Society. Since 2015, he has served as a judge for the selection of the Legacy Award in the field of Law for the D.C. Hall of Fame Society and is a member of that organization's board of directors.

The Ronald C. Jessamy Professionalism Award was established by the Young Lawyers' Division of the Washington Bar Association in 2015**.** The award, given annually, honors a young lawyer who greatly enhances the profession through exemplary practice of law and demonstrates a commitment to professionalism in their practice and through active engagement in bar service.

Mr. Jessamy is listed in the Martindale-Hubbell Legal Directory with an "AV" (very high to preeminent) attorney rating. He was listed in the December 2004 and December 2007 editions of *Washingtonian Magazine* as one of Washington, D.C.'s top lawyers. He is listed as one of Washington, DC's Super Lawyers in the 2010, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019 District of Columbia editions *of Super Lawyers* publication.

Mr. Jessamy has contributed articles to various publications during his professional career, one of which is *Constitutional Grounds to Challenge State Public Utility Commission Restrictions on Use of Utility Name and Logo*, Public Utilities Fortnightly, July 1999. Co-authors, Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., Karen J. Miller. He has provided instruction in trial practice and has judged moot court competitions at local law schools. Mr. Jessamy frequently speaks at schools, before community groups and participates on programs discussing various legal issues. He has been a speaker at national meetings of such organizations as the American Hospital Association, the American Nurses Association, the National Association of Black Accountants and others. He

has appeared as a guest on the nationally syndicated "Tony Brown's Journal" as well as on other television and radio programs throughout his professional career.

Mr. Jessamy has been referred to in the following books**:** ***Open Wide the Freedom Gates***, by Dr. Dorothy I. Height, former President and of the National Council of Negro Women; ***The Presumption of Guilt***, by Harvard University Law Professor Charles J. Ogletree; ***As BIG As It Gets***, by Farrell J. Chiles, former Chairman of the Board of Directors of Blacks In Government, Inc.; and ***Serving Our Children***, by Kevin P. Chavous, former Chair of the Committee on Education, District of Columbia City Council.

Mr. Jessamy was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Reserve in 1972. He was honorably discharged as a Captain.

Mr. Jessamy received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Howard University and a J*uris Doctor* from the George Washington University National Law Center. He also attended the National Institute of Trial Advocacy's training course. He has been admitted to practice law in the District of Columbia since 1974. He is also admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court.

Mr. Jessamy is the father of two adult children, a son, Ronald, Jr. and a daughter, Taylor.

Pleasant Brodnax, Esquire
Biographical Sketch

Pleasant Brodnax is a seasoned advocate with experience in federal court litigation. A skilled courtroom advocate and negotiator, Pleasant specializes in white collar federal criminal litigation. He is a former Virginia Assistant Attorney General and has 30 years of courtroom experience.

Pleasant has served on (and chaired) the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board responsible for adjudicating alleged ethical violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct. He has served on court committees in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, including the Committee on Grievances and the ad hoc committee which made recommended changes to the Local Criminal Rules to conform with new Electronic Case Filings requirements.

Pleasant currently serves on the Virginia State Bar's Standing Committee on Lawyer Discipline (COLD) which oversees the entire attorney disciplinary process, including the Virginia State Bar's investigation and prosecution of complaints.

Pleasant received his B.S. (Business) from Hampton University, Magna Cum Laude. He received his J.D. from William & Mary Law School.

Pleasant has repeatedly been recognized by the Washingtonian Magazine as one of Washington's Top Lawyers and has also been named a D.C. Super Lawyer every year since 2010.

Pleasant is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and serves as a member of the College's D.C. State Committee.