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Robert J. Grey, Jr.

President,
Leadership
Council on
Legal Diversity

Top Law Firm
Diversity
Advocates

A Salute to Civil
Rights Legend,
Judge Damon
J. Keith



Robert J. Grey, Jr.

In the Arena

As President of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, Robert J. Grey, Jr. burns with a passion instilled in childhood – by the legendary civil rights attorney Oliver Hill

ust down the street from the Richmond, Virginia house where Robert J. Grey, Jr. grew up, there lived a towering figure of history. That man was Oliver Hill, the tough but courtly legal scholar and lawyer who was embroiled in one of the most important issues of the day: Would America's schools—and the opportunities they created—be open to all, or would they remain separate and unequal?

Oliver Hill was a civil rights lawyer, working to rid the country of segregation. Among his many achievements was the 1954 landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, a case that Hill, alongside Thurgood Marshall and a team of distinguished lawyers, had argued before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Hill was also Grey's neighbor, a warm and friendly man who always seemed to have time to sit and talk to the young boy.

Oliver Hill took an interest in Grey's education, giving him steady, inspiring counsel as Grey moved through high school and Virginia Commonwealth University, and on to Washington and Lee University Law School. Then, as Grey prepared to enter the legal profession, Hill gave his protege one more piece of lasting advice.

"The law," he said, "is not a spectator sport."

In Grey's mind, Hill's words echoed those of President Theodore Roosevelt, who celebrated the individual who is not content to sit on the sidelines, but "who is actually in the arena."

Grey has spent the past 40 years living by those words, working "in the arena." Inspired by Oliver Hill, Grey's career, grounded in a successful legal practice, has risen to embrace causes he believes in, including reforms in education, the rule of law, and in changing the very face of the profession he loves.

Today, as President of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), Grey is working overtime to create unprecedented opportunities for attorneys from diverse backgrounds to reach the highest levels of leadership in the law.

All this is a reflection of Grey's passion for justice – and his vision of a profession freed of prejudice and open to new ideas—built upon talent from all backgrounds and from all communities.

This is a mission for which Grey has been preparing all of his life.

Born in 1950, Grey spent the first five years of his life in France and Germany, where his father, Grey, was stationed by the U.S. Army. From his father Robert Sr., a career military officer and pharmaceutical executive, Grey inherited ramrod-straight posture and self-discipline. From his mother Barbara, an educator and museum director, he learned empathy and creativity. Both had a profound influence on his life and career.

After receiving his law degree in 1976, Grey started his own law firm, and, always oriented toward public service, was appointed by Virginia Governor Charles S. Robb to the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, which he later chaired.

In 2002, he joined the law firm of Hunton & Williams, where, as a partner, his practice has focused on regulatory, administrative and government-related matters. He serves as a "neutral" in dispute resolution, a role which suits his temperament and his philosophy as builder of consensus and of bridges.

Grey may be in the "arena," but he makes it look like



Noted Civil Rights Attorney Oliver W. Hill was Grey's neighbor and mentor



Robert talks to scholar

fun—almost easy. He has a relaxed demeanor, a confident stride, and an inquisitive but patient style.

His list of professional and civic leadership positions is a long one. He serves on the board of trustees of St. Catherine's School in Richmond; he has also served on the boards of Virginia Tech and his alma mater, Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. His appointments and honors transcend his home state.

In 2010, he was chosen by President Barack Obama for the board of the Legal Services Corporation, an organization which has provided more than \$400 million a year for legal services for low-income individuals in America.

Perhaps the most notable highlight of a storied career was his election as president of the American Bar Association in 2004. He devoted much of his two-year tenure to the issue of jury reform.

"The legal profession has been good to me," says Grey. "I've been blessed to work with outstanding individuals throughout the years, and I've had wonderful experiences. I want to give back something of value."

In 2010, Grey was offered the chance to give something back, in a very big way. His friend Rick Palmore, General Counsel of General Mills, asked him to become Executive Director (and later, President) of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, a

months-old group drawn from the General Counsel of Fortune 500 corporations and the Managing Partners of the nation's leading law firms.

It would be Grey's job to build the organization.

After thinking it over "for about 15 seconds," Grey said yes. Since then, LCLD has grown to more than 220 Members, and has developed far-reaching programs to benefit minority and women attorneys at every stage of their careers.

"The legal profession is many good things," says Grey, "but it is not leading the way when it comes to recruiting, advancing, and retaining diverse talent. We need to change that, and I believe that LCLD is the organization to lead the charge."

In five short years, LCLD has already touched the lives of thousands of young lawyers and law students. And if Grey has his way, the next five years will create a tidal wave of diverse legal talent that will transform the profession (See sidebar, page 29, for more).

"Through LCLD's extraordinarily committed membership, we are identifying the most outstanding rising leaders in the law," he says. "We're arming them with the most powerful tools imaginable, in order to succeed at levels of leadership that were unthinkable even a few years ago."

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At the law school level, LCLD has mentored 2,292 law students in 33 cities since 2012. LCLD's members have created summer jobs for 536 1L Scholars (first-year law students), and LCLD's flagship initiative, the Fellows Program, has provided unique networking and training opportunities for more than 600 partner-level attorneys in corporations and law firms, hand-selected by their organizations as the next generation of leaders in the profession.

"What's fantastic about this early progress with LCLD is not the stats so much, though the numbers are indeed encouraging," says Grey. "The really cool thing is that these students and young attorneys are building invaluable networks of contacts—deep, strong relationships—that will propel them forward for many years to come."

"They are building their own paths forward, their own stepping stones and their personal brands. No one in this growing community of LCLD Fellows is going to get lost in the shuffle. And there will be many, many more."

Grey and the other leaders of LCLD see a time, not many years off, when there will be not several hundred Fellows, but thousands.

To accomplish that goal, Grey works at approximately 600 miles per hour, the average flight speed of a passenger jet, which is where you can usually find him. He travels constantly, crisscrossing the country to meet with law students and law professors, diversity professionals, CEOs, the media, and, of course, his own LCLD board and membership. Like the politician he once was (an unsuccessful run for Mayor of his home-

town, Richmond, VA), Grey makes a lot of speeches and shakes a lot of hands.

He recruits new members for LCLD, invites existing members to take on new responsibilities, and encourages younger, diverse attorneys to broaden their networks and raise their visibility. He likes new ideas and works hard to attract dynamic and provocative talent to speak at LCLD's high-profile annual meeting.

All this travel and outreach is making an impact, he says. LCLD is taking hold.

The organization is putting down roots and, particularly through the rapid growth of the Fellows program, it is seeing breadth as well as depth. The changes LCLD will bring about—opening leadership positions to fresh, diverse talent—will make profound and lasting change for the country, says Grey. His vision is nothing less than a legal profession as diverse as the country it serves.

That's an outcome that Grey's boyhood hero and life-long mentor, Oliver Hill, would surely smile upon and applaud. ■

Thousands of Fellows in 2020:

The Tipping Point for LCLD

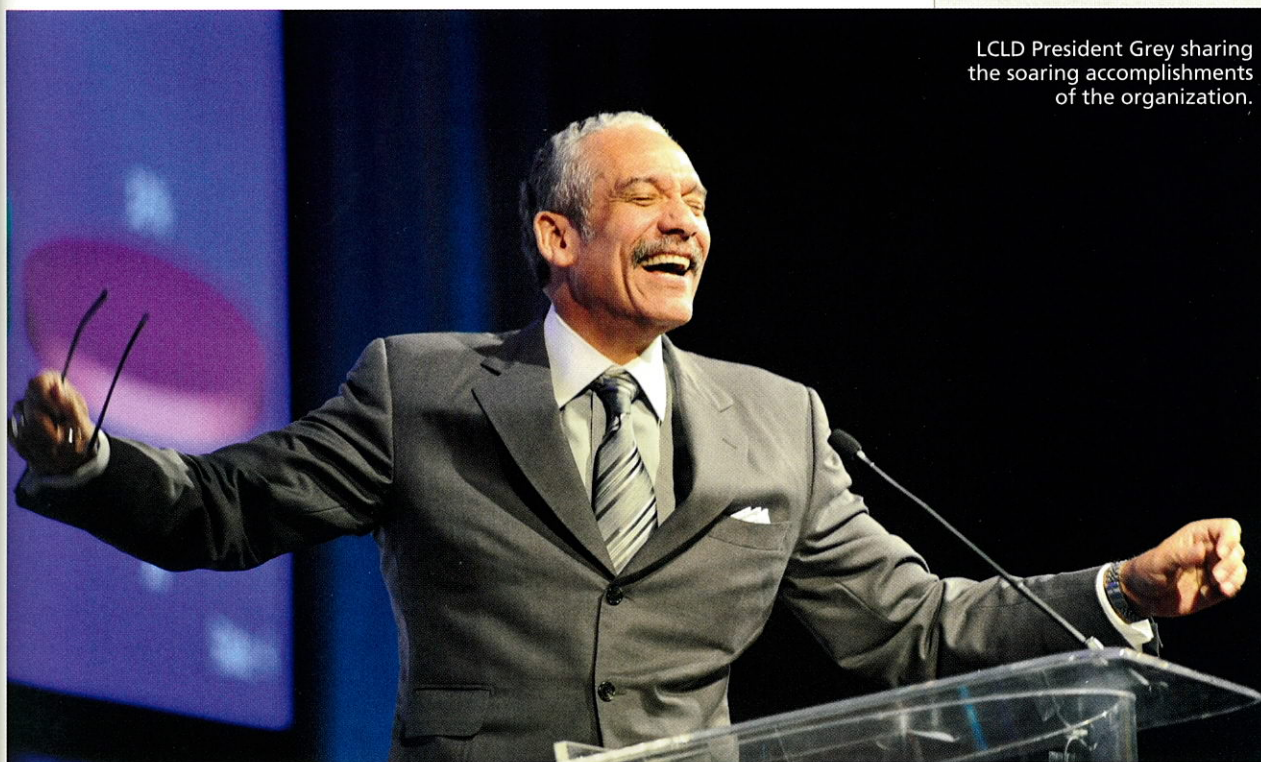
Robert J. Grey, Jr. and the leadership of LCLD look down the road five years and see thousands of LCLD Fellows, each of them prepared by LCLD's set of programs to lift their own career trajectories and, in the process, strengthen the entire legal profession.

"There is a kind of magic that occurs when you reach a number like that," says Grey. "You will begin to see change at all levels of law, as the influence of thousands of Fellows is felt in law firms, boardrooms and courtrooms, academia, and government."

"The year 2020 will be a 'tipping point' for the profession," he says. "We are starting to refer to this as 'Vision 2020.'"

"In the first five years of LCLD, we laid the foundation for this success. The structure, the programs, and the commitment are there," says Grey. "Now, we're ready to really grow." Actually, not just grow, he adds.

"We'll soar."



LCLD President Grey sharing the soaring accomplishments of the organization.