



## 2023 Spring Meeting Speaker Biography

**Fred D. Gray FACTL**  
**Thurgood Marshall Equality and Justice Award**  
Civil Rights Activist  
Tuskegee, AL

Fred David Gray is a pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement and a native of Montgomery, Alabama. He is one of the few courageous Black lawyers who risked their lives to attack segregation in the court. He currently lives in Tuskegee, Alabama with his lovely wife, Carol, and continues to practice law specializing in civil rights litigation.

At ninety one (91) years old, he has pending in the Circuit Court of Macon County, Alabama a case filed by him on behalf of Macon County to declare Macon County owner of the old courthouse site, which was conveyed to the Tuskegee Chapter United Daughters of Confederacy in 1906 for the purposes of converting the property to a white only park and erecting a monument to the memory of the confederate soldiers from Macon County in honor of their service in the Civil War. Macon County wants to reclaim the property and remove the statue.

Mr. Gray was educated at the Nashville Christian Institute, Nashville, Tennessee; Alabama State University, Montgomery, Alabama; and Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. He is both a lawyer and an ordained minister in the Church of Christ.

His Bar affiliations include Admission into the Alabama and Ohio Bars (1954) as well as admissions into the following Courts: Supreme Court of Ohio, 1954; Supreme Court of Alabama, 1954; U. S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, 1955; Supreme Court of the United States, 1956; U. S. Court of Appeals for Fifth Circuit, 1958; U. S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, 1963; U. S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, 1968; U. S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, 1982; Tax Court, 1968.

Among other presidencies, Mr. Gray is a past President of the National Bar Association (1985-86) and the first African American President of the Alabama State Bar (2002-2003). His legal career spans over 68 years.

Mr. Gray won many battles in the struggle for equality and justice. His first civil rights case was the representation of Claudette Colvin, a 15-year old African American high school student who refused to give up her seat on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in March of 1955. In December of 1955, he represented Mrs. Rosa Parks, who was arrested because she refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, igniting the Montgomery Bus Boycott, *City of Montgomery v. Rosa Parks*. He penned the Resolution that launched the Boycott. He was, also, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s first civil rights attorney.

The list of civil rights cases that he won can be found in most constitutional law textbooks. They include, but are not limited to the following:

- I. *Browder v. Gayle*, 352 US 903 (1956). Mr. Gray challenged the constitutionality of Alabama state laws mandating segregation on buses. On December 17, 1956, the Supreme Court rejected the city and state appeals to reconsider its affirmation of the lower court that racial segregation on public transportation was unconstitutional and three (3) days later the order for integrated buses arrived in Montgomery.
- II. *Mitchell v. Johnson*, 250 F. Supp. 117 (M.D. Ala. 1966) which was one of the first civil actions brought to remedy systematic exclusion of blacks from the jury pool.
- III. *Lee v. Macon County Board of Education*, 231 F. Supp. 743 (M.D. Ala. 1967), in which serving as lead trial counsel, along with civil rights icons Jack Greenberg and Constance Baker Motley, he obtained a trial order that desegregated all Alabama public schools.
- IV. *Gomillion vs. Lightfoot*, 364 U.S. 339 (1960), in which the Supreme Court found an electoral district with boundaries created to disenfranchise African Americans violated the Fifteenth Amendment. *Gomillion* has been quoted in over 600 federal court opinions.
- V. *Knight v. Alabama*, 900 F. Supp. 272 (1995) in which the Eleventh Circuit held that there were still vestiges of racial discrimination in higher education in Alabama.
- VI. The landmark case of *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education*, 294 F.2d 150 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1961) in which the Court reinstated students who were expelled from Alabama State College and held that the students were unconstitutionally expelled, and students attending a state supported institution are entitled to a hearing before expulsion. It spelled the end of the doctrine that colleges and universities could act in loco parentis to discipline or expel their students.
- VII. *Williams v. Wallace*, 240 F. Supp. 100 (MD Ala. 1965), a class action suit brought by African Americans against Governor Wallace and the State of Alabama, in which the court ordered Governor Wallace and the State of Alabama to protect marchers as they walked from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to present grievances as a result of being unable to vote. The publicity of these actions led to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- VIII. *Pollard v. United States of America*, 384 F. Supp. 304 (M.D. Ala. 1974) which preserved and protected the rights of persons involved in the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Mr. Gray encouraged the President of the United States to make an official apology to the participants of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. The participants also requested a memorial in their honor. The apology was made at the White House in May of 1997.
- IX. *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People v. State of Alabama, ex rel. John Patterson, Attorney General*, was brought by the State of Alabama (1956) in which it outlawed the NAACP from doing business in the State of Alabama. This case was taken to

the Supreme Court; three times through the state court system and twice through the federal court system. The ultimate result was the NAACP was able to resume business operations in the State of Alabama.

One of the first African Americans to serve in the Alabama Legislature since reconstruction, he served from 1970-1974. He received the Capitol Press Corps Award for Best Orator in the House of Representatives in 1972.

Mr. Gray is the managing shareholder in the law firm of Gray, Langford, Sapp, McGowan, Gray, Gray & Nathanson P.C., with offices in Montgomery and Tuskegee, Alabama. The firm is nationally recognized and has received extensive press coverage in such publications as USA Today, Ebony Magazine, Jet Magazine, NBA Magazine, The Washington Times, Case Western Reserve University Magazine, New York Times, and ABC's Prime Time Live.

Mr. Gray served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Case Western Reserve University and Faulkner University. He was a Master Benchers of the Montgomery Chapter of the Hugh Maddox Inns of Courts; a life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation; a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers; a Fellow of the International Society of Barristers; a member of the Executive Council of the National Conference of Bar Presidents; and on the Board of Directors for the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Miller Brewing Company selected him to appear in its 1989 calendar, *Gallery of Greats, Black Attorneys: Counsels for the Cause*. He was further recognized by Miller Brewing Company as the representative of all lawyers in the 1993 tenth edition, "Excellence Has Many Faces." Miller has again recognized Mr. Gray in its 2000 *Gallery of Greats Calendar, Pillars of the Past: Architects of the Future, as one of the three Black Attorneys: Counsels for the Cause*. He has received honorary Doctor of Laws degrees from The University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Alabama State University, Southwestern Christian College, Case Western Reserve University, Pepperdine University, Abilene Christian University, Jones School of Law of Faulkner University, Santa Clara University and John Jay College of Criminal Justice, The City University of New York, Oklahoma Christian University (through Cascade College); The honorary Degree of Humane Letters from Huntingdon College, Lipscomb University, Morgan State University and Tuskegee University. In 2022, he received honorary degrees from the University of Alabama and Princeton University.

Case Western Reserve University named Mr. Gray the Fletcher Reed Andrews Graduate of the Year (1985), elected him to the Society of Benchers (1986), and presented him the highest honor the law school bestows on one of its graduates, the Law School Centennial Medal (1993).

The American Bar Association bestowed upon Mr. Gray its Spirit of Excellence Award (1996), which celebrates the achievements of lawyers of color and their contributions to the legal profession and the Thurgood Marshall Award (2004). Other awards include Harvard University Law School's highest award, the Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion (2004); the Sarah T. Hughes Civil Rights Award given by the Federal Bar Association (2004); the Alabama Academy of Honor (2005); the American Association for Justice, Leonard E. Weinglass in Defense of Civil Liberties Award (2009); and the National Bar Association, Vince Monroe Townsend, Jr. Legends Award.

From the City of Montgomery, he was awarded the "Gifts of Giants Award" (2013), in Celebration of Montgomery Bus Boycott Civil Rights Legends; Commendation by Alabama Governor Robert Bentley (2014); NBA Resolution naming the annual "Fred D. Gray Hall of Fame Award Luncheon".

In 2015: historic marker noting his contributions erected in front of Supreme Court of Alabama building and in 2016 erected in Tuskegee, Alabama; Pillar of Justice Award by The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law; Lifetime Achievement Award by Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.; Lifetime Achievement Award by Hyundai Motor America; NBA Board of Governors' Resolution to President Barack Obama to confer the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award; Honorabilis by Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill in recognition of lifetime achievements; Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference Co-Chairs' Phoenix Award; Margaret Chase Smith by National Secretaries of State (NASS); Trailblazer Award by Case Western Reserve University at its initial Unveiling Ceremony, October 2017; Equal Justice Initiative, "Champion of Justice Award (2018).

Mr. Gray has lectured on local, state, national and international levels. He was Practitioner-In-Residence at Pepperdine University; lecturer at Case Western Reserve University, School of Law; Tenneco Distinguished Speaker, University of Houston; guest lecturer for the Harvard Law Forum Speaker Series, Harvard Law School, and facilitator for the Federal Executive Institute, Charlottesville, Virginia, and University of Hull, United Kingdom. In December of 2000, Gray was appointed to the Charles Hamilton Houston Chair in Law at The North Carolina Central University School of Law. Lipscomb University honored Mr. Gray by the naming of the Fred D. Gray Institute for Law Justice & Society in recognition of his commitment to civil rights and against racism.

He authored *Bus Ride to Justice*, first released in 1995. A Revised Edition released in 2013 was previewed at the Jimmy Carter Center and broadcast on C-Span Book TV. Upon receipt of a copy, President Barack Obama wrote in a letter to Mr. Gray, "Today, we stand on the shoulders of giants who helped move us toward a more perfect Union, and I appreciate your sharing your story." *The Tuskegee Syphilis Study* was released in May 1998. He also wrote *The Sullivan Case: A Direct Product of the Civil Rights Movement*, a review for Case Western Reserve Law Review.

Mr. Gray was the moving force in the establishment of the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center, Tuskegee, Alabama. A 501(c)3 Corporation, it serves as a memorial to the Study participants, and educates the public on contributions in the field of human and civil rights by Native Americans, Americans of African s of European descent. It also strives to educate on the role Tuskegee-Macon County played in the Civil Rights Movement.

Case Western Reserve Law Review featured Mr. Gray in its Spring 2014 edition entitled, *Bus Ride to Justice: A Conversation with Fred Gray*. In its Summer 2017 edition, Mr. Gray is interviewed and chronicled in an article, *In Honor of Fred Gray: Making Civil Rights Law from Rosa Parks to the Twenty-First Century*". The Fred D. Gray Symposium is conducted annually at CWRU School of Law.

**On July 7, 2022, President Joseph Biden awarded Mr. Gray with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, this country's highest award for a civilian.** Mr. Gray's life mission has been to "stamp out discrimination," and that is what he continues to do.