

THE JOURNAL OF BLACKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

□ Tracking the Progress of African Americans on the Editorial Rolls of America's Most Prestigious Law Journal

Over the 118-year history of the Harvard Law Review, many thousands of America's most gifted law students have served on the editorial board of the nation's most prestigious law journal. Recent JBHE research determined that of the thousands of past editors only 26 have been black.

This past November Barack Obama made political history by becoming the first black man from the Democratic Party to be elected to the United States Senate. Fourteen years ago, in 1991, Obama also achieved a historical milestone when he became the first African American elected president of the nation's most prestigious law journal, the *Harvard Law Review*.

The first issue of the student-operated *Harvard Law Review* was published on April 15, 1887. Today, as in the past, the case notes are student-produced, but feature articles tend to be written by law school faculty, other legal scholars, or judges. The highly esteemed review is published eight times during the academic year. Each issue is about 250 pages. Subscriptions are \$55 a year. Currently, the *Harvard Law Review* has about 8,000 subscribers.

The rules of admission to the editorial board of the *Harvard Law Review* are as follows: After an examination which tests a student's editing skills together with an evaluation of academic performance in the first year of law school, about 40 second-year law students are asked to join the review. Until recently black faces on the review staff have been rare. Yet JBHE research has uncovered 26 African Americans who have served on the editorial board over the 118-year history of the *Harvard Law Review*.

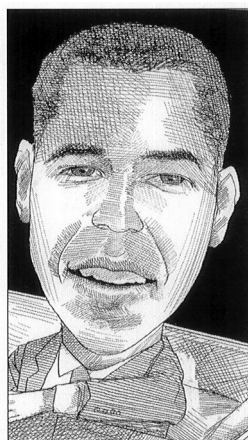
He was the first black to make law review



Charles Hamilton Houston

The first black member of the *Harvard Law Review* was the famed legal scholar and strategist Charles Hamilton Houston, a member of the Class of 1922. Houston went on to be the chief architect of the legal strategy which led to the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The second African American to win



Barack Obama

The first black president of the Harvard Law Review

an editorial post on the *Harvard Law Review* was Houston's first cousin, William Henry Hastie. Hastie served on the editorial board in 1929 and 1930. In 1937 Hastie became the first black appointed to a federal district judgeship. In 1949 President Truman appointed Judge Hastie to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.



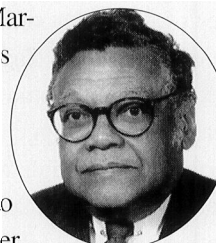
William H. Hastie

Over the next half century only two blacks served on the editorial board of the *Harvard Law Review*. William T. Coleman, now partner at O'Melveny and Myers in Washington, D.C., was elected to the review in 1943. He served as law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter and later worked with Thurgood Marshall at the Legal Defense and Educational Fund. In 1975 Coleman was named secretary of transportation in the Ford administration. Coleman told JBHE, "I found the experience of working on the *Harvard Law Review* of invaluable help in my later practice, indeed, later life in general." Coleman added, "Charles Hamilton Houston and William H. Hastie, who preceded me on the *Harvard Law Review*, opened doors for me. I also was intro-

duced to their student, Thurgood Marshall. All three were my close friends and mentors."

Here in sequence are later black editors of the *Harvard Law Review*.

John Robinson Wilkins was named to the law review board in 1945. He later clerked for Judge William Hastie and then taught at the Boalt Hall law school at the University of California at Berkeley. Professor Wilkins, who was the uncle of current Harvard Law School professor David B. Wilkins, died in 1976 at the age of 51.

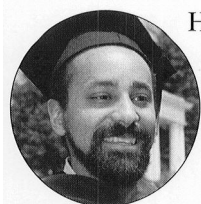


William T. Coleman

Thirty years would pass before another black student would be named to an editorship at the *Harvard Law Review*. From 1975 to 1982 five blacks were selected to the editorial board. They were:

- Christopher F. Edley was named to the board of the *Harvard Law Review* in 1975. He is now dean and professor of law at the Boalt Hall law school of the University of California at Berkeley. Edley was previously a professor at





Christopher F. Edley

Harvard Law School. He made news recently when he proposed that the Boalt Hall law school convert from a state-run law school to a private institution.

- Adebayo Ogunlesi, elected to the law review in 1977, currently is head of global investment banking for Credit Suisse First Boston. He has been with the firm since 1983. He is a graduate of Oxford University and also holds an MBA from Harvard. Ogunlesi is currently advising the government of his native Nigeria on privatizing state-owned industries.

- W. Randy Eaddy was named to the *Harvard Law Review* in 1977. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Furman University, a predominantly white institution of 3,300 students in Greenville, South Carolina, Eaddy is now a partner in the Atlanta law firm Kilpatrick Stockton. Eaddy recalled, "There was no parallel to my work on the law review for developing keen and probing analytical skills and enhancing precision in writing about legal issues and principles. They are the lifeblood of practicing law at a highly sophisticated level."

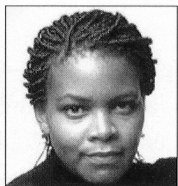
- David B. Wilkins followed in the footsteps of his uncle with his election to the law review in 1978. Currently he is the Kirkland and Ellis Professor of Law at Harvard Law School.

- In 1982 Annette Gordon-Reed was the first black woman to be elected editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. Since 1992 she has been a member of the faculty of the New York Law School. She is the author of the 1997 book *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*.

Professor Gordon-Reed told JBHE, "I was an editor in the book review section. It was an amazing experience to work with authors on the reviews they submitted. It was an invaluable experience for me as a young writer to have a chance to help other writers shape their pieces for publication."

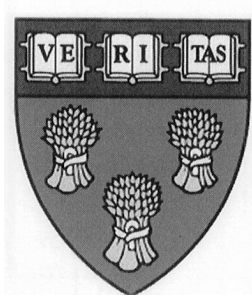
Black Editors in the Past Decade

Other than the historical appointment of Barack Obama in 1991 as president of the law review, no other black person was elected to the board in the 1983 to 1995 period. Then, beginning in 1996, it became common for blacks to win seats on the law review board.



Annette Gordon-Reed

It is possible that the increased number of blacks on the review in recent years is due in some cases to a new affirmative action policy for the election of new members. The *Harvard Law Review's* Web site notes that "Fourteen editors (two from each first-year section) are selected based on a combination of their first-year grades and their competition scores. Twenty editors are selected based solely on their competition scores. The remaining editors are selected on a discretionary basis. Some of these discretionary slots may be used to implement the review's affirmative action policy."



"During the 30-year period between 1945 and 1975 no black person made law review at Harvard Law School."

Here, in chronological order, are the black members of the *Harvard Law Review* who have served as editors since 1996. There is no evidence that affirmative action played a role in any particular appointment:

- David K. Panton, who, like Obama, also served as president of the *Harvard Law Review*, is now vice president of Mellon Ventures in Atlanta. A graduate of Princeton University, he was a Rhodes scholar and has served in the Jamaican parliament. "Working with some of the brightest and most impressive people I have ever encountered," Panton told JBHE, "was one of the most enriching and rewarding experiences of my life. The fact that my peers for whom I have so much respect elected me as president of the *Harvard Law Review* remains, to date, the highest honor I have ever received."

- Until recently Ketanji Brown Jackson was an attorney at the Feinberg Group which has offices in New York and Washington. A magna cum laude graduate of Harvard College, she served as a clerk for Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer.

- Kimberly J. Jenkins is an assistant professor at the Emory University School of Law. Professor Jenkins is a graduate of the University of Virginia and now teaches courses in civil procedure. "The credential and prestige of serving on the *Harvard Law Review*," Professor Jenkins says, "is one that



helped to open doors to new opportunities. For me the law review was undoubtedly one of the most beneficial experiences that I had in law school.”

“The fact that my peers selected me as president of the Harvard Law Review remains, to date, the highest honor I have ever received.”

- Ismail J. Ramsey is currently an attorney with the law firm Kecker and Van Nest in San Francisco. In addition to his law degree, Ramsey holds an MBA from the Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley.

- Tracy-Elizabeth Clay is a graduate of Stanford University who was elected to the law review in 1997. Since 2002 she has served as executive director of Teach for America in Philadelphia.

- Paige A. Scott Reed is an associate at Prince, Lobel, Glovsky, and Tye in Boston. She specializes in commercial litigation. A native of New York City, Scott-Reed is a 1992 graduate of Radcliffe College. After law school she served as a law clerk to Dolores K. Sloviter, former chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.



Paige A. Scott Reed

- Roger A. Fairfax Jr. is an associate at O’Melveny & Myers in Washington, D.C. His work is largely directed to white-collar crime and securities regulation. Fairfax also serves as a visiting assistant professor at the William and Mary School of Law. He told JBHE, “Editing the law review provided me exposure to top-notch legal scholarship, reinforced the careful and rigorous approach to analyzing the legal issues that my professors were advancing in the classroom, and gave me the opportunity to forge lasting friendships with fellow editors.”

“Doors that might have remained closed are open to me and my opportunities within the legal profession seem almost endless.”

- Russell Robinson is an acting professor of law at UCLA. A graduate of Hampton University, Robinson clerked for Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer.

- Shaun Palmer is an attorney in the public integrity section of the U.S. Department of Justice’s criminal division. He is responsible for prosecuting election fraud and public corruption cases.

- Cametra A. Thompson until recently was an associate at Powell Goldstein in Washington, D.C. A graduate of Stanford University, her practice focuses on affordable housing and community development tax credit transactions.

- Katina Ancar is an associate at Farella Braun & Martel in San Francisco. She specializes in insurance coverage practice. Ancar is a graduate of Stanford University.

- Kwame Manley is assistant United States attorney for the northern district of Maryland.

- John H. Ray III is an associate in the Chicago law firm Jenner & Block. He focuses on securities litigation and domestic and international arbitration. He is a graduate of the University of Minnesota. Ray maintains that “the law review experience was excellent training in legal research and writing, as well as time management.”

- A. Benjamin Spencer is an assistant professor of the University of Richmond School of Law. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 2001 and holds a master’s degree in criminal justice policy from the London School of Economics. He was the valedictorian of the Class of 1996 at Morehouse College.

Professor Spencer told JBHE, “My experience with the law review was the most valuable experience that I had during my time at law school. I believe it was largely because of the law review credential that I was able to obtain

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my clerkship on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Doors that might have remained closed are open to me and my opportunities within the legal profession seem almost endless.”

- Danielle Gray was elected to the law review in 2003. She participated in a Supreme Court brief filed by law students in the University of Michigan affirmative action cases. She is currently an associate at O’Melveny & Myers in Washington.

- Several black members of the *Harvard Law Review* verify that Michael King, an African American, was elected to the editorial board of the law review in 1998. Neither the Harvard Law School Alumni Association nor any of King’s colleagues on the review were able to inform JBHE of his current whereabouts.

