



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **Delegate Magazine 1986**

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NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION  
61st Annual Convention  
July 27-August 2, 1986  
Denver Marriott Hotel  
Denver, Colorado

[[image]]

# "PARTNERS IN UNITY: THE BLACK LAWYER AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY" THE NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION PERSPECTIVE

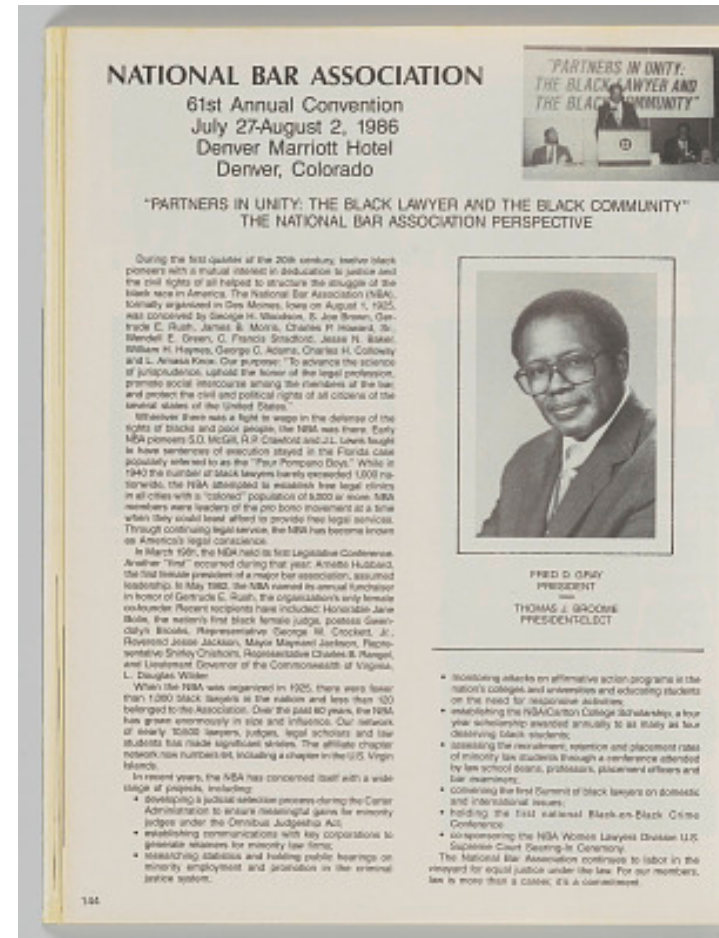
During the first quarter of the 20th century, twelve black pioneers with a mutual interest in education [[dedication]] to justice and the civil rights of all helped to structure the struggle of the black race in America. The National Bar Association (NBA), formally organized in Des Moines, Iowa on August 1, 1925, was conceived by George H. Woodson, S. Joe Brown, Gertrude E. Rush, James B. Morris, Charles P. Howard, Sr., Wendell E. Green, C. Francis Stradford, Jesse N. Baker, William H. Haynes, George C. Adams, Charles H. Colloway and L. Amasa Knox. Our purpose: "To advance the science of jurisprudence, uphold the honor of the legal profession, promote social intercourse among the members of the bar, and protect the civil and political rights of all citizens of the several states of the United States."

Wherever there was a fight to wage in the defense of the rights of blacks and poor people, the NBA was there. Early NBA pioneers S.D. McGill, R.P. Crawford and J.L. Lewis fought to have sentences of execution stayed in the Florida case popularly referred to as the "Four Pompano Boys." While in 1940 the number of black lawyers barely exceeded 1,000 nationwide, the NBA attempted to establish free legal clinics in all cities with a "colored" population of 5,000 or more. NBA members were leaders of the pro bono movement at a time when they could least afford to provide free legal services. Through continuing legal service, the NBA has become known as America's legal conscience.

In March 1981, the NBA held its first Legislative Conference. Another "first" occurred during that year: Arnette Hubbard, the first female president of a major bar association, assumed leadership. In May 1982, the NBA named its annual fundraiser in honor of Gertrude E. Rush, the organization's only female co-founder. Recent recipients have included: Honorable Jane Bolin, the nation's first black female judge, poetess Gwendolyn Brooks, Representative George W. Crockett, Jr., Reverend Jesse Jackson, Mayor Maynard Jackson, Representative Shirley Chisholm, Representative Charles B. Rangel, and Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, L. Douglas Wilder.

When the NBA was organized in 1925, there were fewer than 1,000 black lawyers in the nation [[nation]] and less than 120 belonged to the Association. Over the past 60 years, the NBA has grown enormously in size and influence. Our network of nearly 10,500 lawyers, judges, legal scholars and law students has made significant strides. The affiliate chapter network now numbers 64, including a chapter in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In recent years, the NBA has concerned itself with a wide range of projects, including:



- developing a judicial selection process during the Carter Administration to ensure meaningful gains for minority judges under the Omnibus Judgeship Act;
- establishing communications with key corporations to generate retainers for minority law firms;
- researching statistics and holding public hearings on minority employment and promotion in the criminal justice system;

[[image]]  
FRED D. GRAY  
PRESIDENT

THOMAS J. BROOME  
PRESIDENT-ELECT

- monitoring attacks on affirmative action programs in the nation's colleges and universities and educating students on the need for responsive activities;
- establishing the NBA/Carlton College Scholarship, a four year scholarship awarded annually to as many as four deserving black students;
- assessing the recruitment, retention and placement rates of minority law students through a conference attended by law school deans, professors, placement officers and bar examiners;
- convening the first Summit of black lawyers on domestic and international issues;
- holding the first national Black-on-Black Crime Conference
- co-sponsoring the NBA Women Lawyers Division U.S. Supreme Court Seating-In Ceremony.

The National Bar Association continues to labor in the vineyard for equal justice under the law. For our members, law is more than a career, it's a commitment.



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