



The Black Lawyer in Minnesota: 1973-2023

A Story of Firsts and Those Who Made a Difference

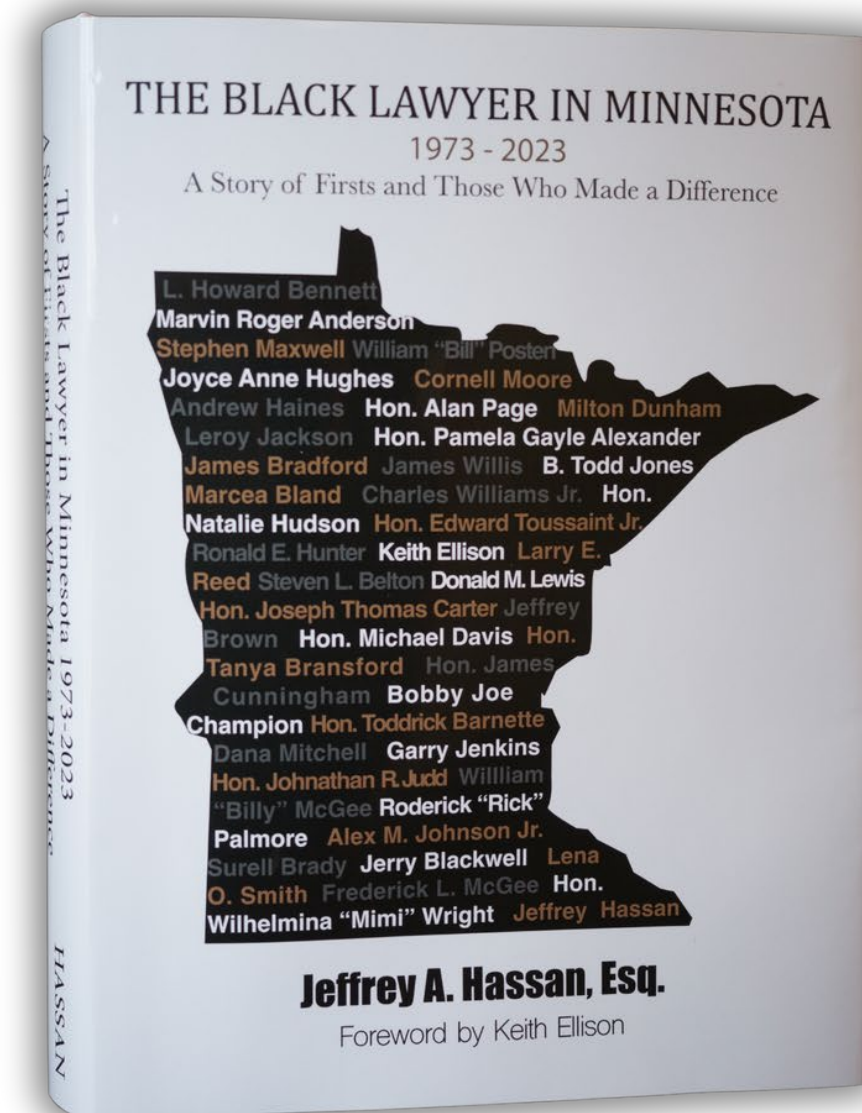
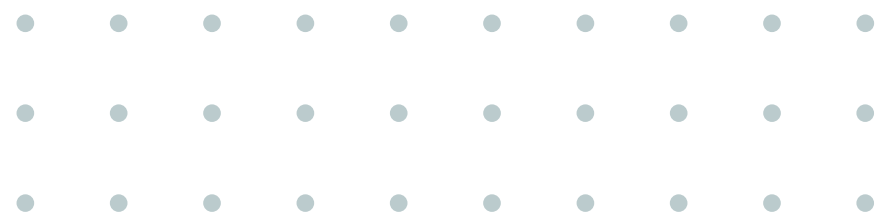
Written by Jeffrey A. Hassan, Esq.

Foreword by Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison



INTRODUCTION

This book was written as a documentary of the significant history and impact of Black lawyers in Minnesota between 1973 and 2023 – a fifty-year retrospective on Black lawyers' role in the Minnesota legal landscape and the foundation laid for subsequent generations.





WHY WRITE ABOUT BLACK LAWYERS?

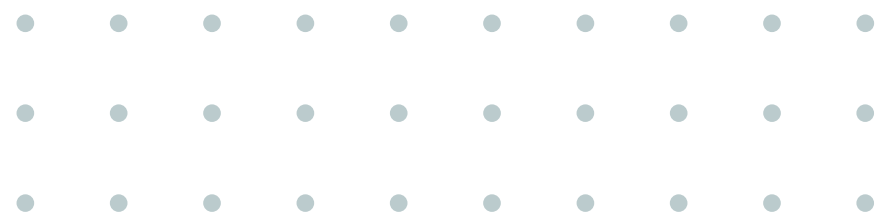
Writing from the perspective of 2023, these might
be appropriate questions to ask.



CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING

In the 1950s and 60s, many
of these lawyers grew up
witnessing:

- Lynchings
- Church bombings
- Cross burnings
- This was the America that
shaped them



SYSTEMIC SEGREGATION IN THE NORTH

- Redlining denied Black families home mortgages
- Restrictive covenants blocked Black homeownership
- Segregation in housing and education was common
- Many of these lawyers were just generations removed from slavery



SHAPING EVENTS OF A GENERATION

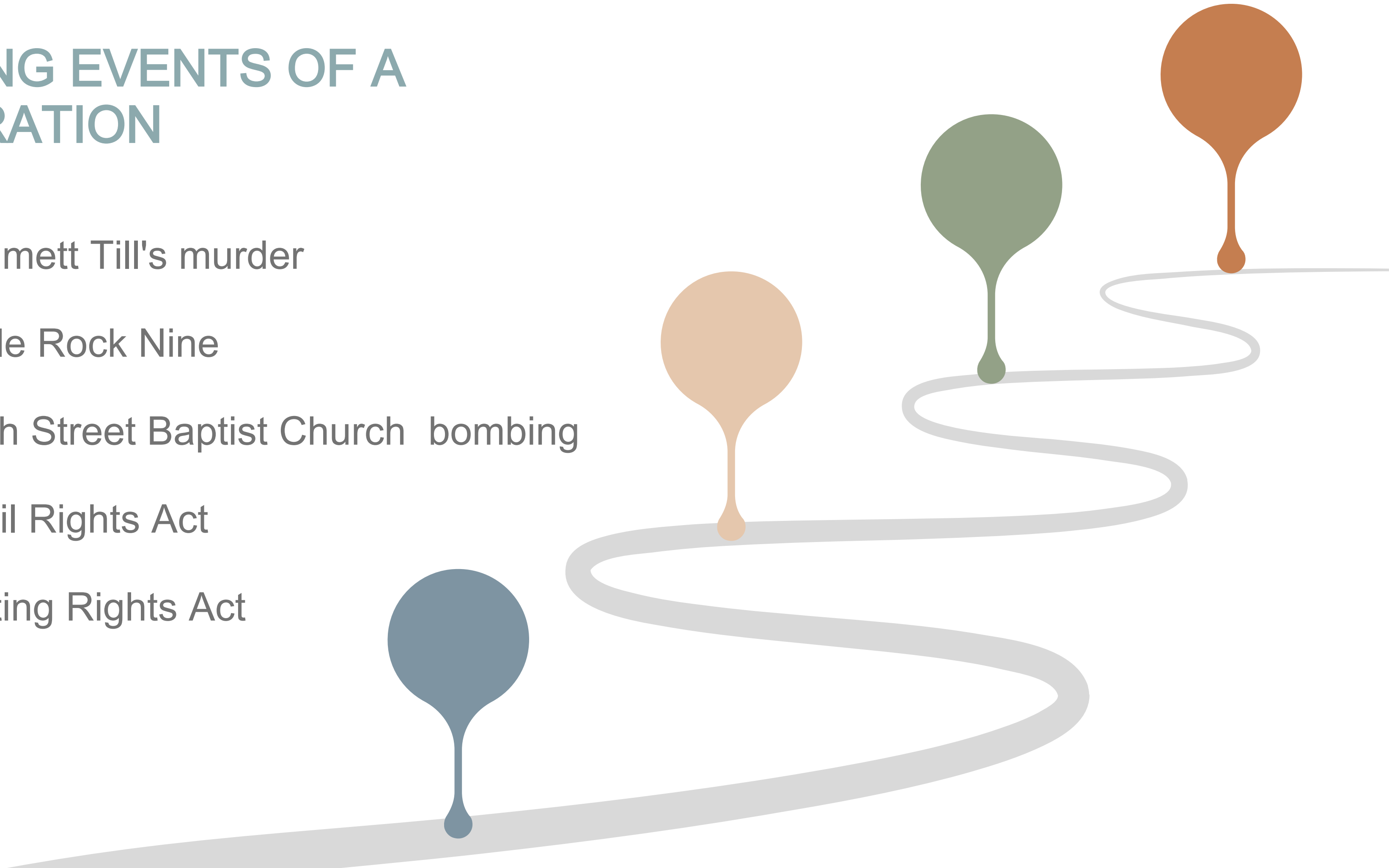
1955 : Emmett Till's murder

1957 : Little Rock Nine

1963 : 16th Street Baptist Church bombing

1964 : Civil Rights Act

1965 : Voting Rights Act



ATTORNEYS PROFILED & STORIES TOLD

ATTORNEYS PROFILED:

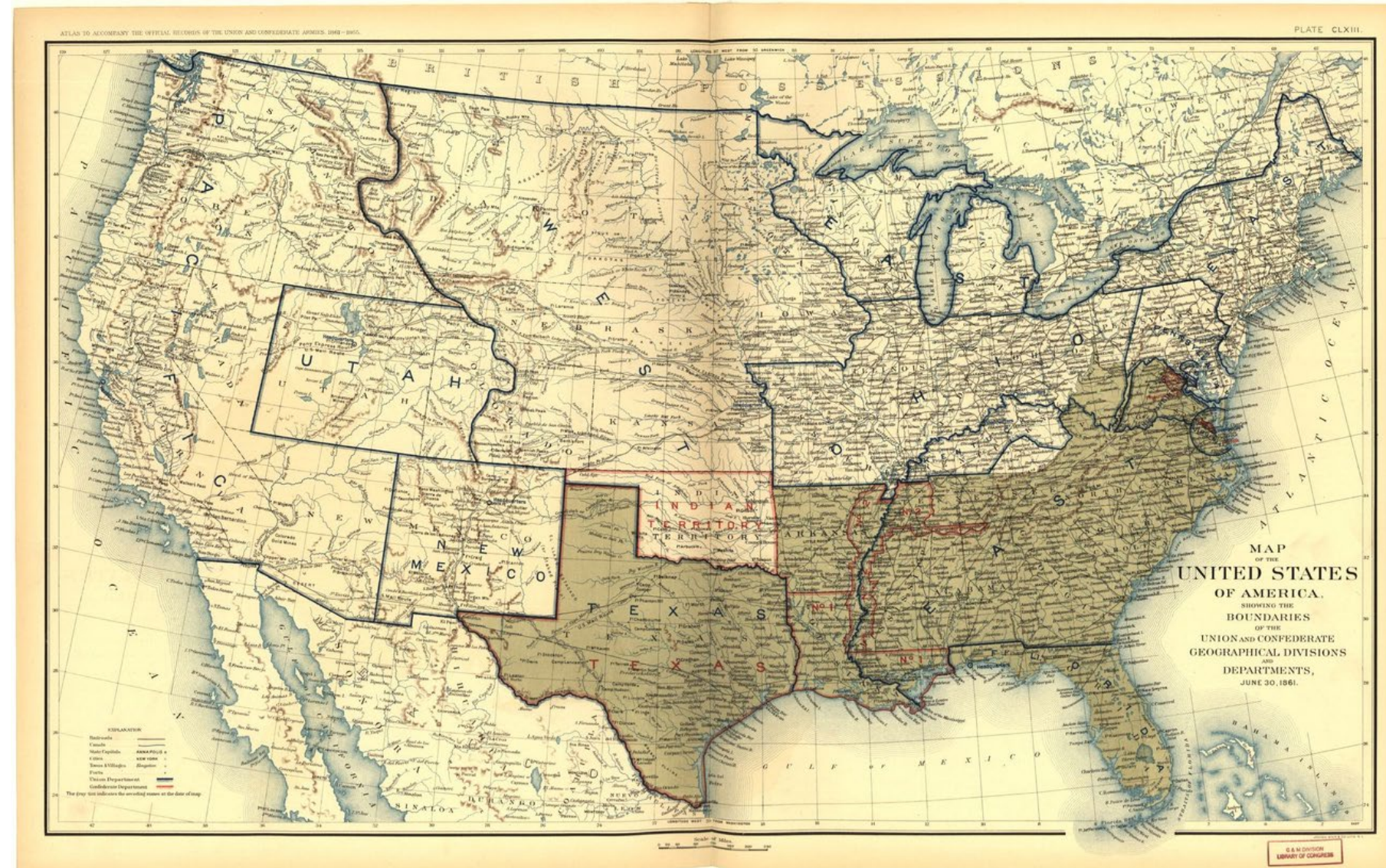
- Marvin Anderson
- Joyce Anne Hughes
- Hon. Edward Toussaint, Jr.
- Hon. Alan Page
- Ronald E. Hunter
- Larry E. Reed
- Steven L. Belton
- Hon. Pamela Alexander
- Donald M. Lewis
- Hon. Jos. Thos. Carter
- B. Todd Jones

Hon. Natalie Hudson
Jeffrey Brown
Tanya M. Bransford
Keith M. Ellison
Hon. James Cunningham
Sen. Bobby Joe Champion
Hon. Wilhelmina Wright
Hon. Toddrick Barnette
Dana Mitchell
Garry Jenkins
Hon. Johnathan R. Judd

STORIES TOLD:

Hon. L. Howard Bennett
Hon. Stephen L. Maxwell
Hon. William Posten
Hon. Michael J. Davis
William “Billy” McGee
Roderick “Rick” Palmore
Alex M. Johnson, Jr.
Surell Brady
Hon. Jerry Blackwell

GROWING UP IN SEGREGATION



Northern Upbringings

Joe Carter, Natalie
Hudson, Keith Ellison,
Bobby Joe Champion

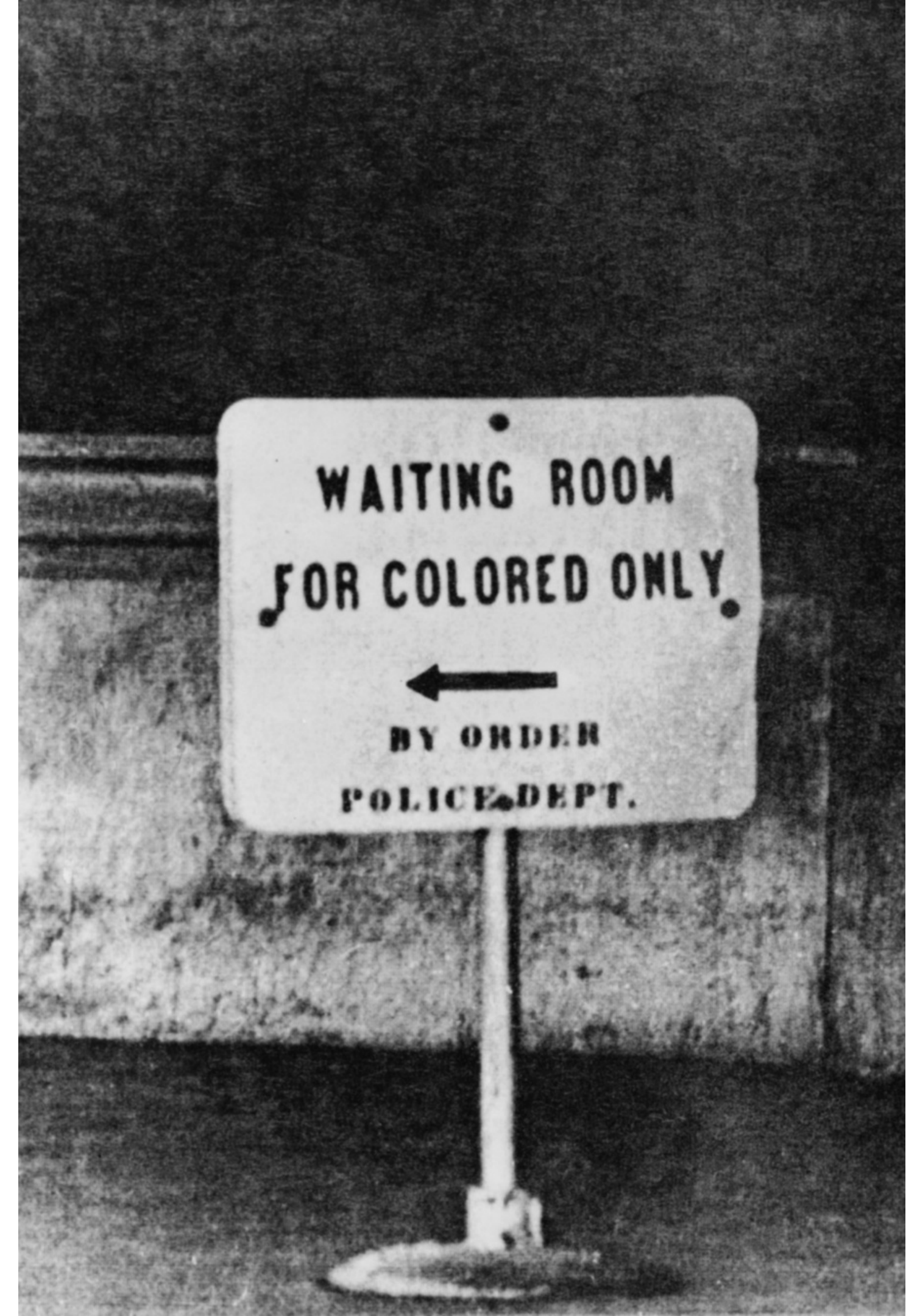
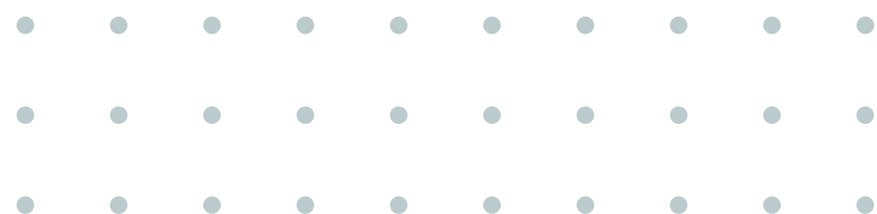
Southern Roots

Edward Toussaint,
Larry Reed, Mimi
Wright, Johnathan Judd

SOUTHERN PILGRIMAGES

Annual trips to visit family in
the Jim Crow South

- No lodging
- No public rest stops
- Food packed for the road
- They endured, unaware
of the full weight of racial
injustice until adulthood





THE CIVIL RIGHTS IMPACT

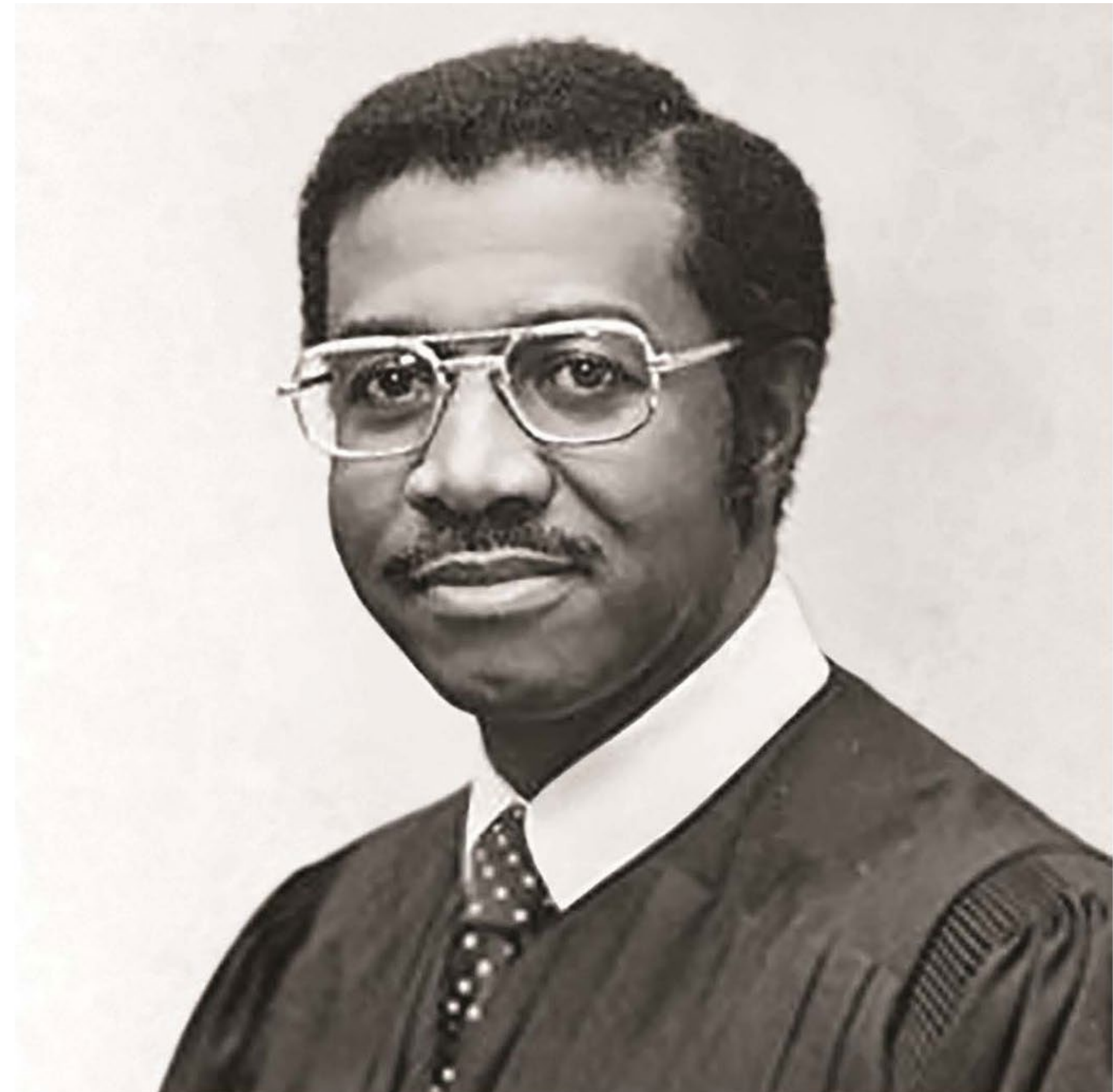
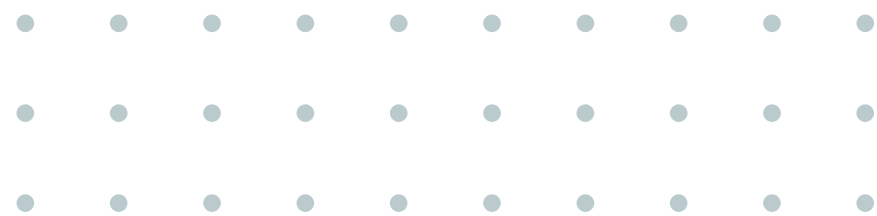
*Affirmative Action opened law school doors
This era marked the first mass entry of Black
students into legal education*

1973 – A Starting Point

Twelve Black lawyers in Minnesota

Two Black judges:
Stephen Maxwell and William Posten

Ten others laid the groundwork for what
would follow



50 Years Later

Over 600 Black lawyers in
Minnesota

25+ Black judges across the
state

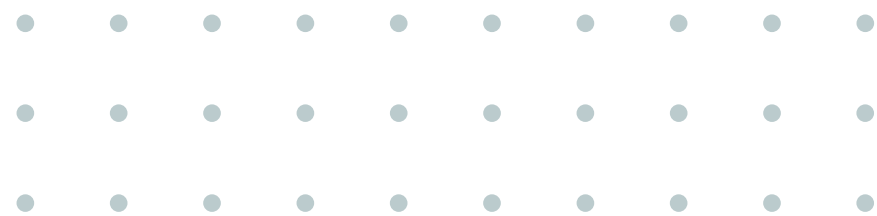
Representation in **all** judicial
districts and federal courts



National Context

Minnesota data regarding the inclusion of Black lawyers tracks with national data estimating the entry of Black lawyers into the profession:

- Only 5% of U.S. lawyers are Black
- This percentage has stayed constant for decades

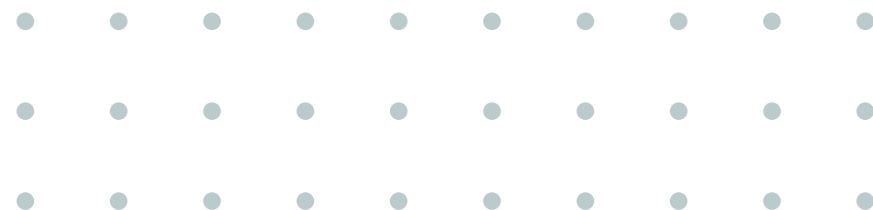


MABL IS BORN (1973)

Minnesota Association
of Black Lawyers

Founded By Moore, Anderson,
Hughes, and Williams

*A key moment of organizing and
recognition*



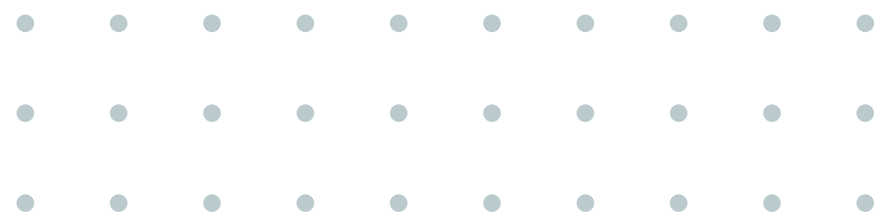
MABL



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF BLACK LAWYERS

The George Floyd Catalyst

- Chauvin's conviction was a turning point
- Led by Keith Ellison and Jerry Blackwell
- For the first time, a white officer was convicted in Minnesota for killing a Black man



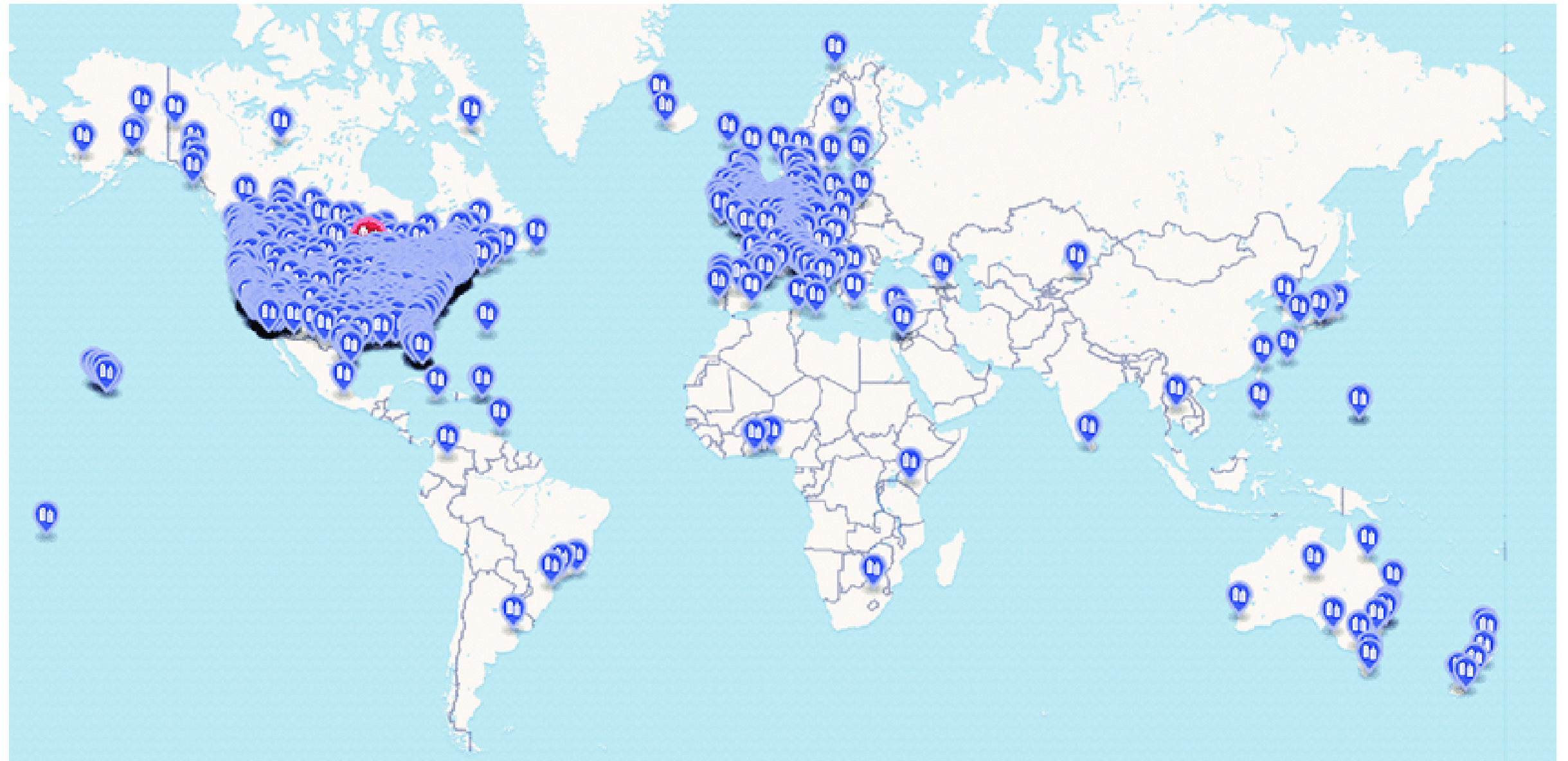
A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

FLOYD'S DEATH SPARKED PROTESTS
AROUND THE WORLD:

FROM LAGOS TO
LONDON

FROM PARIS TO
TOKYO

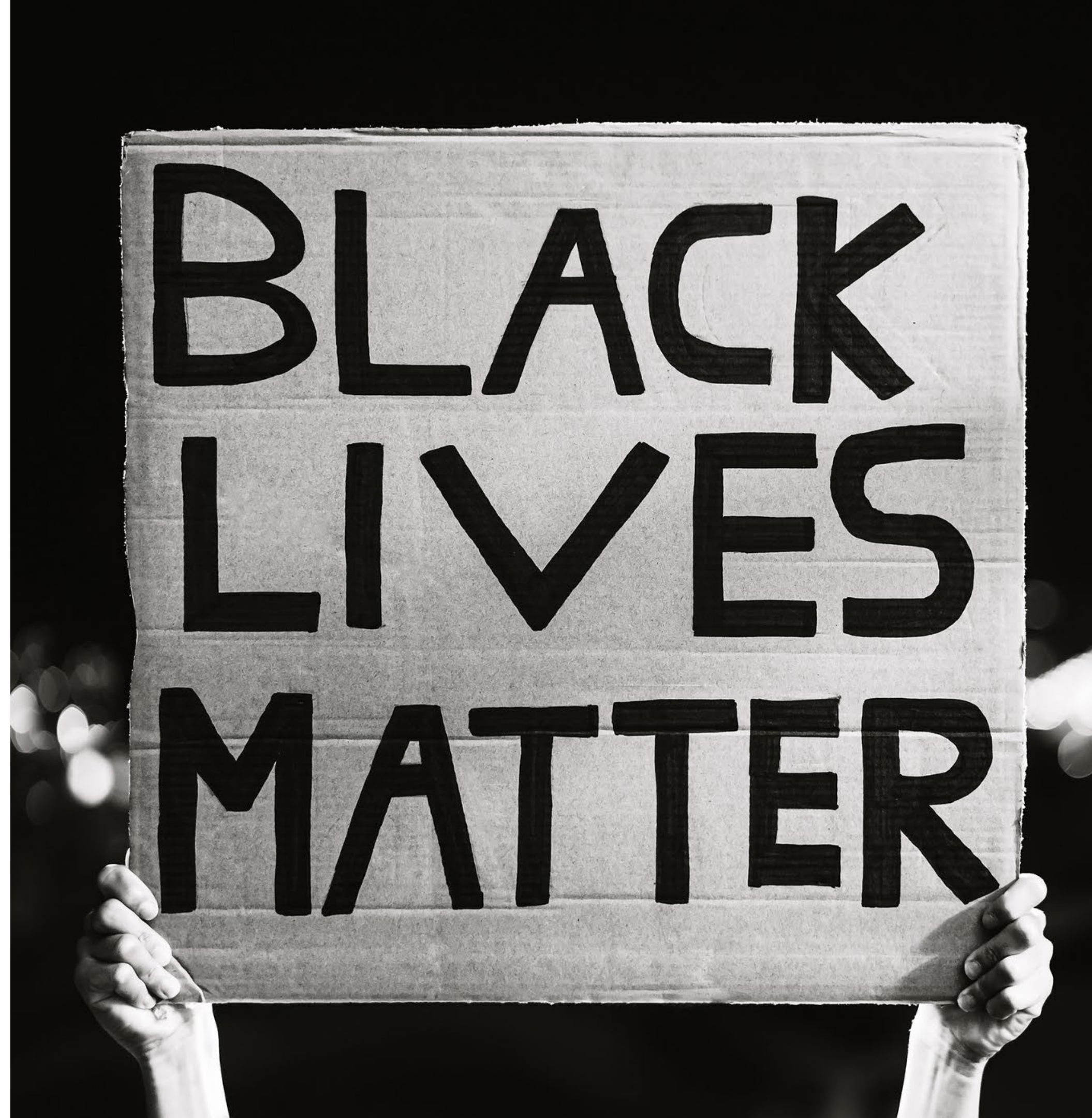
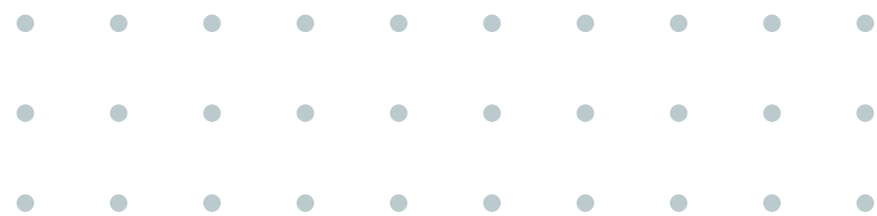
FROM
MINNEAPOLIS TO
SENEGAL



A History of Killings

George Floyd was not the first
Minnesota cases include:

- Ticel Nelson
- Philando Castille
- Jamar Clark
- Daunte Wright
- Amir Locke
- Ricky Cobb



Why Chauvin's Trial Was Different

Black leadership changed the outcome

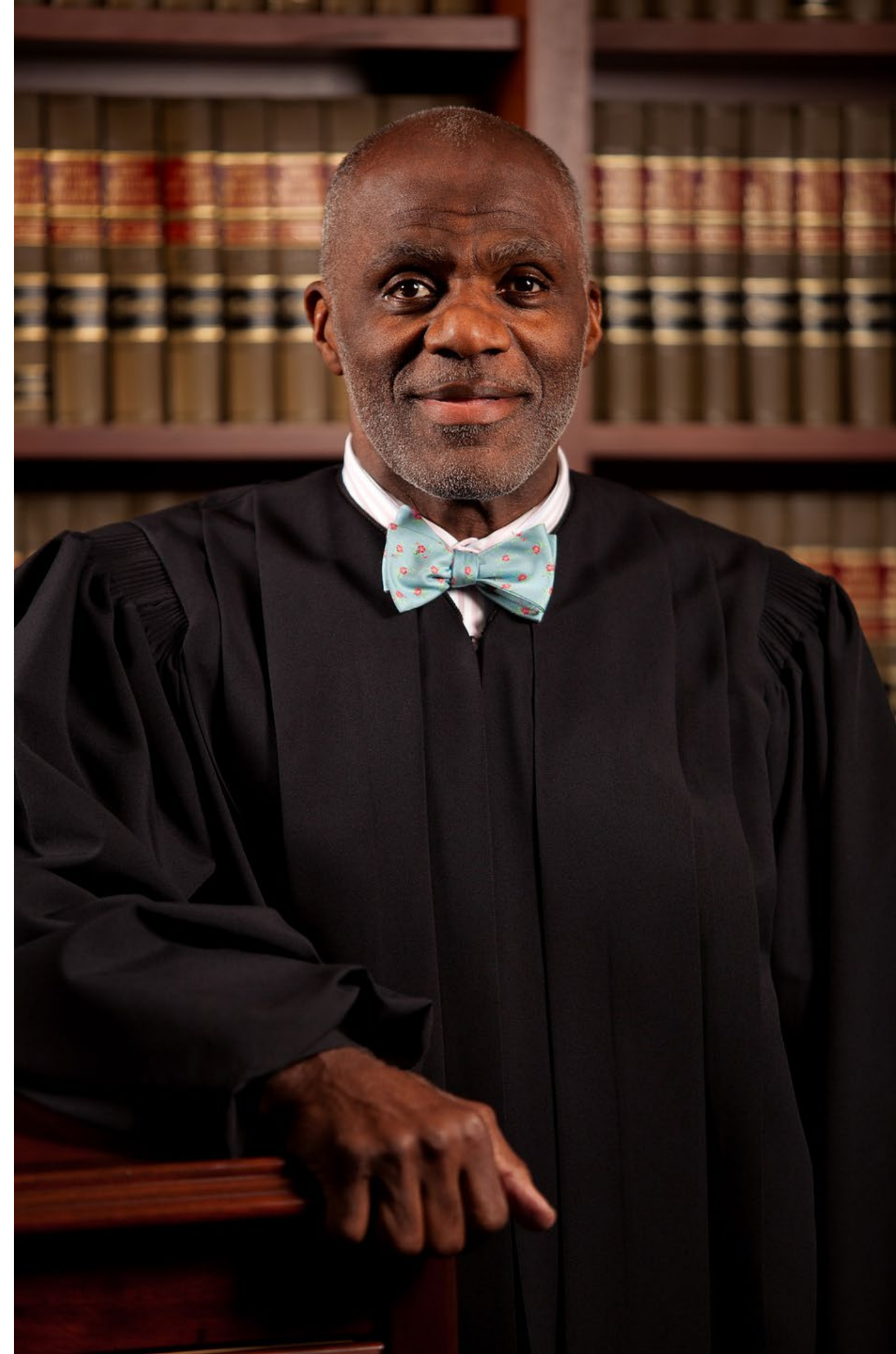
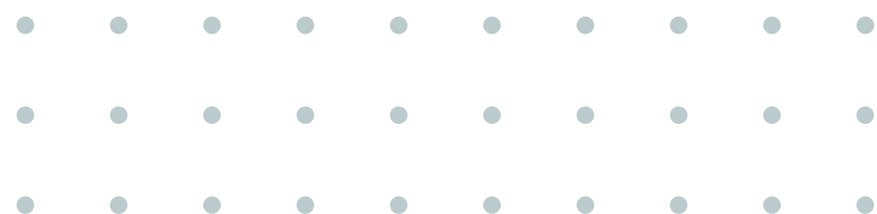
- Keith Ellison led the case
- Jerry Blackwell brought a forensic edge to the prosecution



Principle Over Career

These lawyers made career choices based on principle:

- Joyce Hughes left UMN Law in protest
- Alan Page challenged the judicial system
- Pamela Alexander ruled against crack cocaine sentencing disparities



Pioneers Who Stood Tall

These lawyers made career choices based on principle:

- Keith Ellison led protests in law school
- These lawyers consistently stood for justice
- They mentored the next generation and gave back



WHETHER PRIVATE, PUBLIC, OR HBCU, ONE THING WAS CONSISTENT EDUCATION WAS KEY

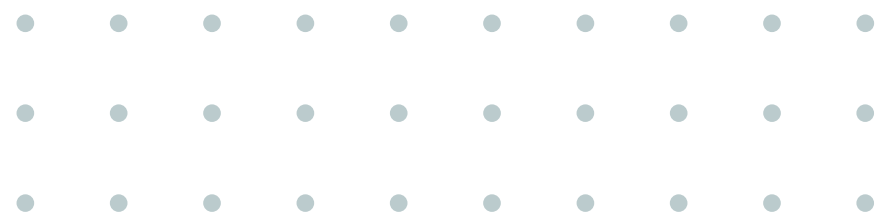
The Role of Education



EDUCATION = FREEDOM

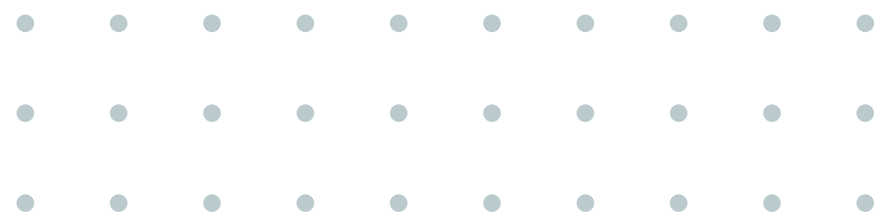
Education wasn't just a path, it was liberation as Judge Mimi Wright said:

“Education is the key for having the kind of freedom you want”



Categories of Ascent

- 1.Private/Catholic School students
- 2.Public school students who learned to adapt
- 3.First-generation college attendees from blue-collar neighborhoods



First in Their Families

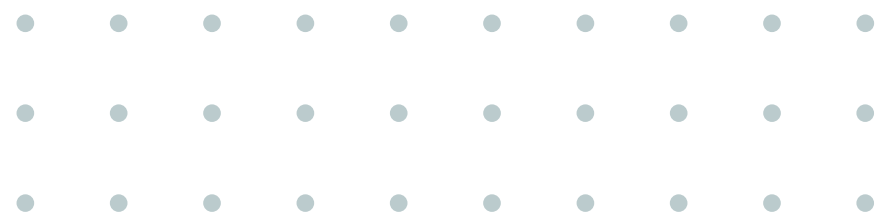
These trailblazers:

- Often had no mentors
- Navigated college on their own
- Were discouraged by counselors but persisted



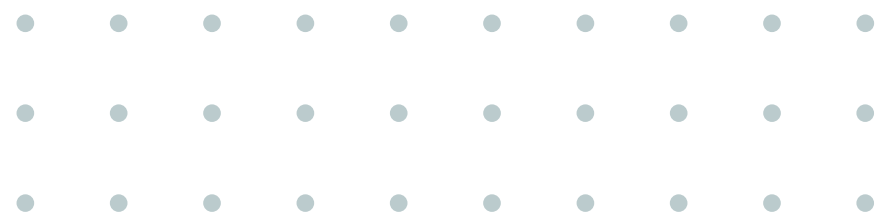
THE POWER OF MOTHERS

Many credited their mothers
as their foundation
Strong, guiding influences
shaped their self-worth and
ambition



A LOVE OF READING AND WRITING

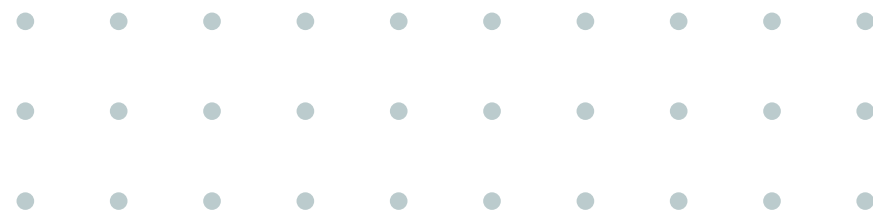
Many initially dreamed of
being journalists or writers
Books and words shaped
their worldview and led them
to the law



FROM MEDICINE TO LAW

Several considered medicine
before law...

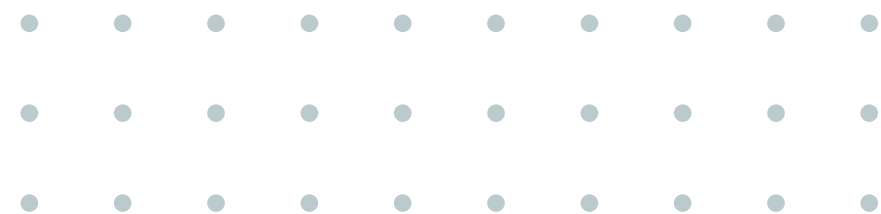
But found their true calling
through purpose, not
prestige



A JOURNEY, NOT A SHORTCUT

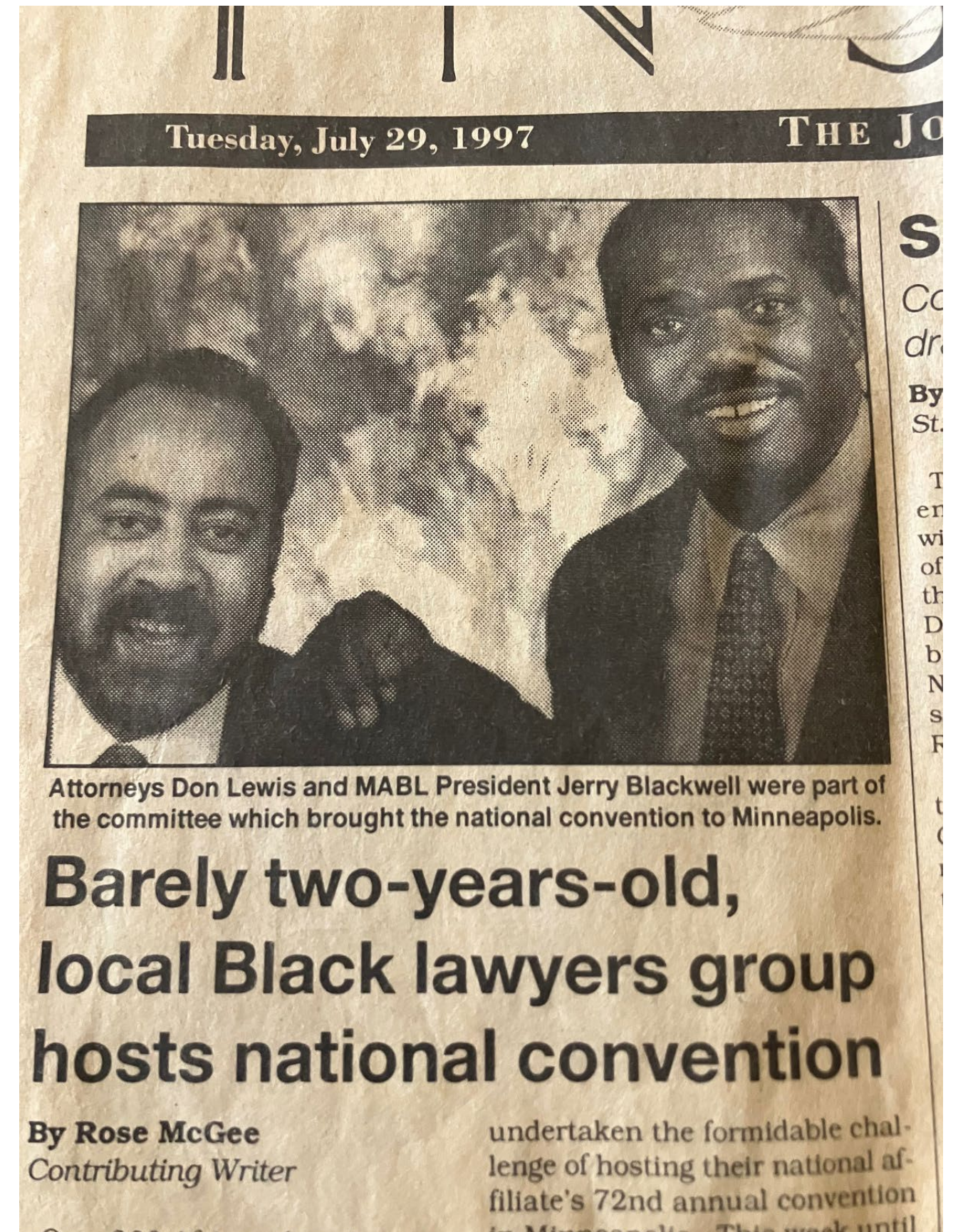
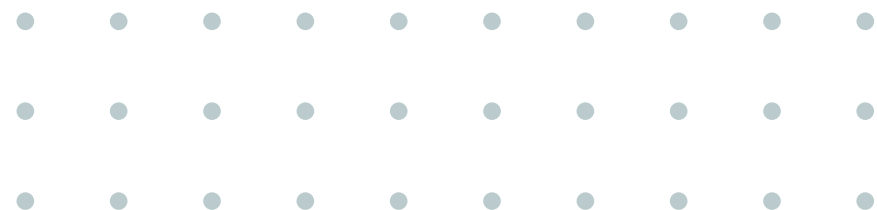
Their stories show that
success came with time

Perseverance, resilience, and
purpose were their
companions



FIRSTS THAT CHANGED THE STATE

- The list of “firsts” is long
- These pioneers redefined what was possible in Minnesota law



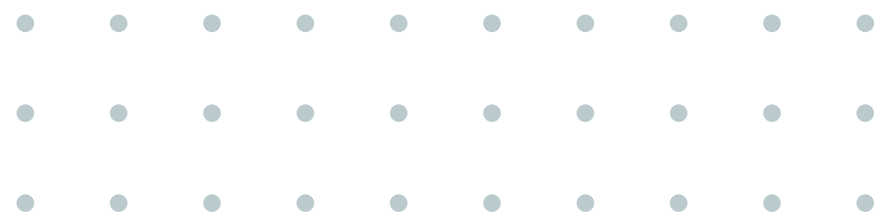
Honoring Those Who Came Before

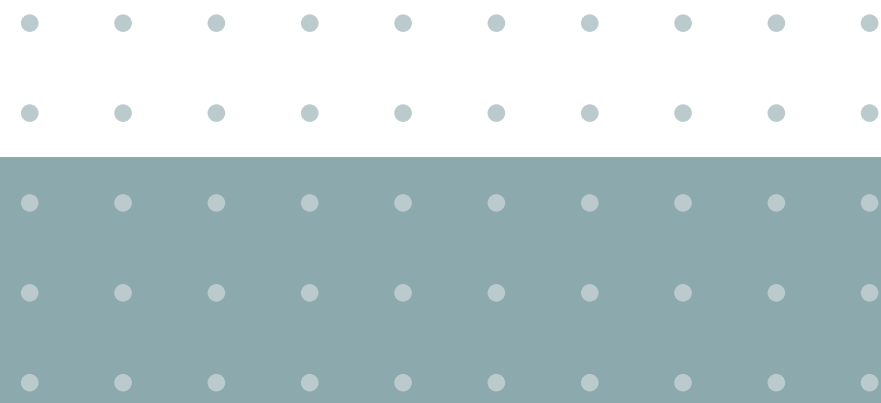
- John F. Wheaton
- Frederick L. McGee
- Leno O. Smith
- L. Howard Bennett
- Their stories laid the earliest bricks of the foundation



Uplifting Future Generations

- These lawyers created organizations, scholarships, and mentorships
- They built ladders for others to climb
- Justice was never the endpoint — it was the mission

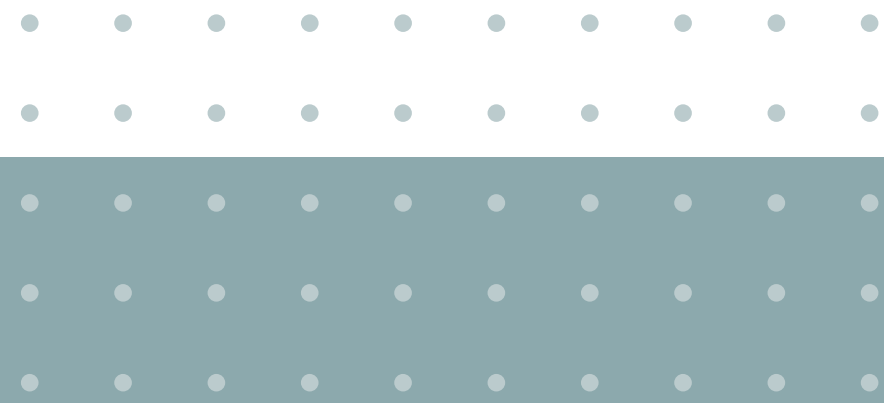




THANK YOU

Do you have any question?





GET THE BOOK

<https://hassanesq.com>

