



Oliver W. Hill was born in Richmond, Virginia, May 1, 1907. He completed elementary school in Roanoke and high school in Washington, D.C. He was a graduate of Howard University, where he received the degrees of A.B. from the College of Liberal Arts and J.D. from the School of Law. He was married to the late Beresenia A. Walker, and they had one son, Oliver W. Hill, Jr., a daughter in law, Renee Hill, a granddaughter, Jananda Hill, a step granddaughter, Maia King, and a step grandson, Ja'maa Beckley-King.

Until his retirement in July, 1998, Mr. Hill was a partner in the law firm of Hill, Tucker and Marsh. He became a member of the Virginia Bar in 1934 and, except for time out in the service of the United States Government, practiced law in Richmond, Virginia, beginning in 1939. He served in the Armed Forces from June 1943 through November 1945; and from May 1961 to September 1966, was with the Federal Housing Administration, first as Assistant to the Federal Housing Commissioner and later, as Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Mortgage Credit and Federal Housing Commissioner in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. Hill entered Howard Law School in 1930 with the express intention of challenging America's segregation laws. Mr. Hill and other dedicated lawyer/activists (including his law school classmate and special life-long friend, Thurgood Marshall) worked assiduously under the tutelage of Dean Charles Hamilton Houston to secure all rights incident to first-class citizenship for African Americans. At great personal risk, these courageous individuals educated the general public and the courts as they pursued civil rights litigation on the behalf of their clients.

In 1935, Mr. Hill was one of the founders of the Virginia State Conference of NAACP Branches. This was the first of such organizational tools, which played a pivotal role in fulfilling the mission of the NAACP.

In 1940, Thurgood Marshall succeeded Charles Houston as special counsel to the NAACP and founded the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) to offer some limited protection to both civil rights litigants and the NAACP from an angry public and hostile institutions. From the inception of the LDF until his death, Oliver White Hill remained closely associated with the legal and policy work of the LDF. During his career, Mr. Hill litigated many cases on its behalf.

Some of the landmark cases in which Mr. Hill participated involved such diverse matters as equalization of salaries for public school personnel; the right to serve on grand and petit juries; inclusion in the program of free bus transportation for public school children; equalization of public school facilities; protection of firemen and other railway workers in rights to employment and to fair and impartial representation by the statutory bargaining agent; the right of participation in primary elections; the elimination of segregation on common carriers in both intrastate and interstate travel; the use of public places in a nondiscriminatory and unsegregated fashion, including public schools and places of public assembly and recreation; the securing of housing of their choice; and the right, through an organization such as the NAACP, to assert their constitutional rights and seek redress of their grievances in courts and otherwise, free from harassment by legislative investigatory committees.

He encouraged and helped develop the use of the ballot among minorities and sought to stimulate their participation in organized political party activities. He was a former member of the Richmond City Council, of the Richmond City Democratic Committee and of the first President's Committee on Government Contracts Compliance, known later as the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. His initial national recognition was in 1948 when he won a seat on the Richmond City Council in a city-wide election, becoming the first African American so elected since Reconstruction Days.

Mr. Hill received numerous awards and honorary degrees, including the NAACP's Spingarn Medal, the Presidential Medal of Freedom (the highest civilian award of the United States of America), and the highest award of the American Bar Association.

Oliver White Hill, the consummate lawyer, legal trailblazer and social activist died at his home in Richmond, Virginia on August 5, 2007 at the age of 100 years.