

**CORNELL WILLIAM BROOKS, ESQ.**  
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## EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Nonprofit chief executive, public interest lawyer, and ordained minister with broad experience in both effectively inspiring and strategically advocating for justice through legislation, litigation, research, coalitions, media campaigns, and civil disobedience.

## EDUCATION

**Yale Law School**, New Haven, CT. J.D. 1990. The Yale Law Journal, Senior Editor; and The Yale Law and Policy Review, Member. Presented report to UN Sub-Commission on Discrimination (Geneva, Switzerland).

**Boston University School of Theology**, Boston, MA. M.Div., Social Ethics and Theology Concentration, 1987. Awarded Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship (scholarship and leadership), Jefferson Fellowship (scholarship and preaching), and Oxnam-Leibman Fellowship (scholarship and promoting racial harmony). Post-graduate theological courses: Harvard, Yale and Episcopal Divinity Schools. Co-author of *Looking Beyond Ourselves* (based on a Philippines human rights tour and interviews).

**Jackson State University**, Jackson, MS. B.A., Political Science, 1983. Jacksonian Award (twenty most outstanding graduates), full academic scholarship, and Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. Recipient of Martin Luther King, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Paul Robeson (most outstanding political science student) awards. First Mississippi HBCU student nominated for the Rhodes Scholarship.

## EXPERIENCE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Harvard Kennedy School**, Cambridge, MA. Professor of the Practice of Public Leadership and Social Justice; Director of The William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice at the Center for Public Leadership, 2018-present. Named for William Monroe Trotter, the first African-American Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard and founding influence of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the William Monroe Trotter Collaborative seeks to expand the civil rights and social justice legacy of William Monroe Trotter, bringing together Harvard faculty, staff, and students with leaders in communities across our country to create social impact and build advocacy for transformative public policy.

**The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**, Baltimore, MD. President and CEO. 2014-2017. With sacrificially dedicated executive team and staff, led, grew and energized America's oldest, largest, and most widely recognized civil rights organization amidst generationally unprecedented activism and challenges.

- In the wake of Shelby v. Holder, secured 11 legal victories in 12 months against voter suppression. Reactivated legal department by doubling the number of pro bono firms and hours. Established a partnership with Yale Law School to address redistricting as well as

Yale University to address trauma and policing. Recruited top-flight legal staff to understaffed department. Advocated for the Ferguson Police Department pattern and practice suit, report, and settlement based on the NAACP's racial profiling law. Initiated a suit against government officials and contractors after the Flint Water Crisis.

- Led a record number of marches and demonstrations from Ferguson to Flint in hundreds of jurisdictions in every region of the country, engaging a record number of millennials and "pre-millennials."
- Diversified and grew national coalition to protect the right to vote with the "Democracy Awakening" demonstration and a record 1400 civil disobedience arrests at the nation's Capital, which the *Nation* magazine called "The Most Important Protest of the 2016 Election." Conceived protest and recruited arrestees as the "Congress of Conscience."
- Led a 134-mile "Journey for Justice" march from the Ferguson home of Michael Brown to the Missouri state capital home of Governor Jay Nixon, through a racial ambush and bypassing a Klan assault, as covered by Rachel Maddow. The Journey march and legislative advocacy led to the successful passage of a municipal fine law to decrease racial profiling.
- Organized, led and funded the 1002-mile "America's Journey for Justice" march against voter suppression and police misconduct. Over 43 days and across five states in 100-degree heat, led an inclusive and interfaith coalition of 1000s who marched carrying the American Flag and a Torah from Selma to DC, while five million engaged online. Resulted in congressional leadership committing to supporting the NAACP's most aggressive bill to protect the vote.
- Opposed the nomination of Senator Jeff Sessions to serve as U.S. Attorney General with "neo-old school" social media-driven sit-ins and civil disobedience arrests. The arrests and sit-ins, covered widely on social and traditional media, became globally viral teach-ins on voter suppression. The sit-ins are credited as energizing the opposition to other anti-civil rights nominees of the Trump administration and social justice "resistance" more broadly.
- Testified as one of only a handful of witnesses opposing Senator Sessions, the first such high-profile Senate testimony by the NAACP in years.
- Led the NAACP in taking a much more visible and vocal stand against racist, Anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and homophobic hate crimes by standing in solidarity with the ADL, Human Rights Campaign and the Reform Action Center. First national leader and civil rights organization to call for the removal of the Confederate flag as an inspiration for the assassination of the Charleston Nine by "racial terrorist" Dylan Roof.
- Increasingly higher profile litigation, advocacy and messaging resulted in NAACP being covered not merely as the oldest civil rights organization but increasingly as a much more widely engaged organization by both issue and geography. Coverage on traditional and social media reached record levels, exceeding not only past coverage but exceeding most similarly situated organizations combined. Social media followers grew by 25% annually with 30,000 Twitter followers added in a matter of days.
- Extensive media coverage with hundreds of interviews and panels for nearly every major national newspaper, broadcast and cable network, radio network, online publications as well as considerable international press.
- Through authentic activism and strategic advocacy, emphasizing community presence, online NAACP membership grew by 90%, those members being younger and more racially diverse than the also growing (5%) traditional paper card-carrying members.
- Amidst generational skepticism about the relevance of legacy organizations, chartered a record number of new college chapters and youth councils. Engaged and trained 500

millennial activists through “Millennial Youth Summits.” Partnered with Chance the Rapper for a “Stay Woke and Vote” civic engagement and music tour, reaching millions online with the NAACP as a Twitter Moment, and registering as many as 1000 youth to vote in a single night. Through digital and grass root campaigns, new staff, and corporate support reenergized the NAACP Youth and College Division by putting it increasingly on the front page and frontlines.

- Established new or revived diverse collaborations including: U.S. Chamber of Commerce, African Methodist Episcopal Church, National Head Start Association, Union of Reform Judaism, The Links and Democracy Initiative (with 30 million members).
- After assuming responsibility of lay-off diminished staff and a three-million dollar loss of legal settlement revenue in 2014, raised 80 million dollars, eliminated settlement-deficit the first year, increased revenue across all categories including an 820% increase in online donations, secured a commitment for the NAACP’s largest planning grant of a million dollars, recruited and returned lapsed funders, increased new and number of major donors, and rebuilt a previously skeletal development department.
- With an aging IT infrastructure and antiquated systems, initiated the first online registration for the NAACP convention in 108 years and secured the first major technology investment in many years.

**The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice**, Newark, NJ. President and CEO. 2007-2014.

Led a statewide “social justice think and do tank,” using applied research, advocacy, demonstration programs, and litigation to systemically address “high risk” urban policy challenges. Led passage of six major legislative acts in four years, including two anti-foreclosure bills providing statewide court mediation as well as foreclosure counseling and mitigation. Directed a statewide coalition to pass three prisoner reentry bills, said to be a “model for the nation” by the *New York Times*, promoting employment and providing public/health/education benefits for thousands of state residents. Authored, advocated and secured passage of New Jersey’s “ban the box” law to increase employment opportunities for those with criminal records. This law, supported by business, community and law enforcement stakeholders, was commended by President Barack Obama as a state and federal model. Established state’s first “community court” while catalyzing state’s only youth court and first civil pro bono prisoner reentry program. Executive-produced award-winning documentary, *Moral Panic*, generating major foundation support for a Newark-based national gang violence reduction strategy. Expanded workforce development programs to move hundreds into higher wage work. Testified before the EEOC on employment barriers. Launched a unique economic justice study of Superstorm Sandy and an unprecedented “Social Covenant Bond” initiative/research to leverage anchor institutions for employment. Raised over five million dollars, while administering \$11 million board-designated endowment. Diversified staff and leveraged \$5.6 million in *pro bono* support. Frequent media appearances, public speaking, legislative testimony, and outreach.

**Federal Communications Commission, Office of General Counsel**, Washington, D.C. Special Counsel and Senior Counsel. 1999-2007. Managed an agency-wide team of attorneys, OGC Chief Economist and several major consulting firms that conducted five national studies of market entry barriers faced by small, women and minority-owned businesses in telecommunications. Designed pioneering studies (econometric and qualitative) as evidentiary predicate for major regulatory and legislative reform to increase capital and deal flow for disadvantaged businesses. Brought previously delayed \$1.5 million studies to completion and under budget. Organized first FCC

small business financing conference and first conference on small business market entry barriers. Drafted the FCC's only Opportunity Agenda strategic plan, addressing media ownership diversity. As Acting Director, managed FCC small business office. Advised FCC Chairman, Commissioners, and bureaus on regulations or legislation affecting small business. Served as liaison to 3,000 business organizations.

**U.S. House of Representatives, Democratic Nominee, 10<sup>th</sup> District of Virginia, 1997-1998.**

As first-time candidate, won contested party nomination. With a cohesive team, organized fundraising, two offices, volunteers across ten counties and three cities, a policy team, and GOTV staff. Advocate for school construction, regional transportation proposals, fiscal responsibility, and a patients' bill of rights. Lost in off-year general election to twenty-year incumbent.

**United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Washington, D.C. Trial Attorney.** 1994-1997. Litigated cases of housing discrimination nationwide based upon gender, disability, race, and/or having children. Negotiated and crafted the then largest government settlement based on fair housing testing; settlement provided expanded housing choices to racial discrimination victims in southern Florida. Filed first suit against a nursing home under federal fair housing act alleging race discrimination, using fair housing testing. With ACLU, precipitated a major settlement with the city of Houston on behalf of homeless men denied housing based on HIV/AIDs as well as the housing provider (one of America's largest Southern Baptist churches).

**The Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington, Washington, D.C. Executive Director.** 1992-1994. After management crisis, assumed leadership as director of only regional, inter-jurisdictional fair housing organization responsible for expanding housing choices for discrimination victims. Managed fair housing testing with team of pro bono attorneys, fair housing testers, state, and local officials conducting investigations for litigation under federal, state, and local statutes. Administered federal and state grants to enforce and publicize fair housing laws. Organized first regional fair housing and advertising conference. Doubled workforce to 85 full and part-time staff, and elevated employee morale. Developed multi-year budget; implemented new accounting system; and raised an additional \$1.2 million. Increased reported complaints by 30% through extensive public education campaign and media appearances.

**The National Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Staff Attorney, Fair Housing Project.** 1991-1993. Litigated federal housing discrimination class actions.

**The Hon. Sam J. Ervin, III, Chief Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, Morganton, N.C. Judicial Clerk.** 1990-1991. Drafted wide variety of civil and criminal opinions.

**Affiliations:** Bars of U.S. Supreme Court and Pennsylvania; Common Cause, National Governing Board; Democracy Initiative, Board of Directors; East Orange General Hospital Trustee Board, Second Vice-Chair; N.J. Public Broadcasting Authority, Vice Chair; Attorney General's Prisoner Reentry Taskforce (Gov. Jon Corzine); Gov.-Elect Chris Christie's Transition Team (Homeland Security and Corrections); Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity; Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; and metro DC-VA. newspapers (as a regular columnist).

## **SELECT HONORS AND AWARDS**

The Links Medal (on behalf of the NAACP), 2016.  
Boston University School of Theology Distinguished Alumni Award, 2016.  
The Links Medal for Distinguished Service and Leadership, 2016.  
Doctor of Laws (honorary), Boston University, 2015  
Doctorate of Humane Letters (honorary), St. Peter's University, 2015.  
Doctorate of Humane Letters (honorary), Payne Theological Seminary, 2015.

## **SELECT ARTICLES AND ESSAYS**

"Evolving Trump's America into the Other America We Love," Chapter in *What We Do Now: Standing Up for Your Values in Trump's America*, D. Johnson and V. Merians eds. (Melville House 2017).

"On this MLK Day, it's more important than ever to fight hate and bigotry," with Jonathan Greenblatt, *Washington Post*, January 16, 2017.

"Don't let Sessions dismantle civil rights protections," *Baltimore Sun*, April 30, 2017.

"Racial Equity, Poverty and the Promise of Clean Power," in *Resilience Matters: Forging a Greener, Fairer Future for All*, with Denise Fairchild, Mark Magana, and Miya Yoshitani (Island Press, 2016).

Foreword: *How Many Americans are Unnecessarily Incarcerated*, Report of the Brennan Center, 2016.

"Make sure all Flint kids have access to Head Start," with Yasmina Vinci, *Detroit Free Press*, May 4, 2016.

"Ban the Box," in *Solutions: American Leaders Speak Out on Criminal Justice*, I. Chettiear and M. Waldman eds., (Brennan Center for Justice, 2015).

## **SELECT LECTURES AND ADDRESSES**

"Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Law and the Prophets," Lecture (commemorating the life and legacy of Dr. King), Emory University School of Law, January 12, 2017.

"Intersectionality and the Interdependence Ethic of Martin Luther King, Jr.," Martin Luther King Commemorative Lecture, Claremont McKenna College, January 24, 2017.

"The Ballot and the Testament," Brendan Brown Lecture, Catholic University Columbus School of Law, February 8, 2017.

"The Politics of Hate and Democracies of Hope," Dr. J.M. den Uyl Lecture, Rode Hoed, Amsterdam, Netherlands, March 17, 2017.

"A Woke Democracy: Voter Suppression, Police Misconduct, Protest, and Reform," Keynote Address, Amherst College, March 24, 2017.

"W.E.B. Du Bois and a Twitter-Age Civil Rights Movement," W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture (annual

celebration in Great Barrington, MA, the birthplace of Du Bois), Bard College at Simon's Rock, April 26, 2017.

"Life Lessons from a Twitter-Age Civil Rights Movement," Bennington College Commencement Address, June 2, 2017.

"Yale Activism: Martin Luther King and the Student Prophets Among Us," Keynote Address for Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration (given 25 years after being the first student to preach the annual sermon commemorating Dr. King), Battel Chapel, Yale University, January 20, 2016.

"Criminal Injustice and Public Health," Keynote Address, Boston University School of Public Health, February 3, 2016.

"Born Suspect: the Tragedies of Racial Profiling and the Promise of Racial Redemption," Yale L. Rosenberg Memorial Lecture, University of Houston Law Center, March 3, 2016.

"Lessons in Leadership," Moderated Discussion with David Gergen, Center for Public Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School, April 11, 2016.

"For Such a Time as This," Baccalaureate Address, Boston University, May 17, 2015.

"Transformative Leadership: Lessons from the History and Twitter feed of the NAACP," Lecture, Boston University School of Theology, November 6, 2014.