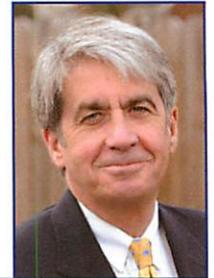


History Still Being Made



By Thomas L. Cuni

I grew up in a small town with a significant Southern tradition. Everything changed in 1954. When I returned to school to start my third year of grade school, integration had come to the school system of Logan County, West Virginia. It seems to me that during the 1950s and 1960s, I was a witness to the most significant social and legal change in our nation's history since the American Civil War. The contradiction

nary men, Judges Nathaniel R. Jones and Robert L. Black Jr., began a conversation about race and the legal community in Cincinnati. It was evident to them that there had been little progress in the racial integration of the local Bench and Bar. In 1987, Judges Jones and Black convened the Round Table of the Cincinnati Bar Association and the Black Lawyers Association of Cincinnati to change the legal profession in our community.

of opportunity in the legal community. However, much needs to happen within the profession to attain the Round Table's goals. The task of leading the Round Table is now the responsibility of Judges Timothy S. Black and John Andrew West, successors to the original co-conveners.

Their first order of business is to begin new initiatives while sustaining existing programs. I believe that the new leaders will welcome new ideas and new methods to achieve the goals of the Round Table. The challenge to the members of the legal profession is to propose and support projects and programs that will further the goals of the Round Table.

We have watched the history of our nation unfold over the years. This is an opportunity to be a part of the history of our times. Your support of the BLAC-CBA Round Table is needed.

The Round Table wants your ideas and suggestions for new and meaningful projects and initiatives. If you are too modest, or too shy, to propose your ideas to either Judge Black or Judge West, send your suggestions to me. I have never been accused of being too shy or too modest about anything. I will give you full credit if your idea is successful and I would be more than willing to accept the blame if it is not.

This is a truly good and important part of our legal community. I hope that you will join these good men in serving our community. 

Cuni is 2009-10 president of the Cincinnati Bar Association.

The BLAC-CBA Round Table has been successful in promoting equality of opportunity in the legal community.

between the institution of slavery and the Enlightenment ideals of equality and liberty were built into the Constitution. The Civil War ended the legal institution of slavery but it did not resolve the issue of equality of treatment of all citizens.

In the 1950s, the relatively new technology of television transformed the national debate on race. The televised images of the non-violent protest led by Dr. Martin Luther King and other participants in the Civil Rights Movement changed long-held, and seldom questioned, beliefs of a majority of Americans about race relations. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it seemed that real progress had been made to resolve the most critical issue in the nation's history.

Progress was certainly made during the 1970s and 1980s, but it was not as rapid, nor as complete, as we had hoped it would be. In the 1980s two extraordi-

The BLAC-CBA Round Table has created and sponsored significant programs such as the Summer Work Experience in Law Program (SWEL) and the Cincinnati Clerkship Plan Program. SWEL has provided summer internships for minority high school and college students in law firms and the legal departments of businesses. Because of its emphasis on preparation for education and work and the development of needed job skills, SWEL has an impressive record of moving students toward college and often into the legal profession.

The Cincinnati Clerkship Plan Program is based upon the promises of more than 25 law firms and businesses to hire minority law students as summer clerks. It, too, has been a successful program that has promoted racial diversity in the legal profession.

The BLAC-CBA Round Table has been successful in promoting equality