

## **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:**

African-American attorneys in Dallas stand a cross-road. The Dallas Bar Association recently published a poll, Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Courts, highlighting that majority and minority race attorneys hold different views of how they are treated by the Dallas court system. Recently, the Dallas Morning News published an article, "Unequal Justice," highlighting one example of how a black male and a white male, both in violation of their parole, were treated differently by the same judge. The white violator, who violated his parole at least five times according to the article, remains out on parole. The black violator, after one violation, is currently serving a life sentence. In June 2006, the Dallas City Council has on its agenda a resolution to remove Associate Municipal Judge Elizabeth Frizell from her judgeship. Judge Frizell is currently in a run-off for another judgeship, and under Texas state law can remain in her position. However, the Dallas City Charter may require her to resign, and is possibly at odds with state law.

As you can see, 2006 has been busy. As always, the J.L. Turner Legal Association stands ready to act. After much introspection and deliberative thought, we have developed the following Judicial RoadMap.

1. Developing a JLTLA "Scorecard for Judges".
2. Reviewing the appointments of attorneys made by the Criminal Courts in determining whether African-American and other minority attorneys are receiving an equitable share of those appointments.
3. Demanding support for post-adjudication drug treatment courts (like Judge John Creuzot's) and other post-release services to reduce the rate of recidivism.
4. Encouraging the participation of minorities in the petit jury and grand jury system.
5. Co-hosting an all day Candidate's Forum on September 23, 2006.

## **JLTLA COMMUNITY & CAREER CENTER**

Dallas needs more minority attorneys. The number of first-year law students at schools across America hit a 15 year low in 2006. The proposed JLTLA Career and Community Center will work with Dallas youth to steer them to legal careers. Complete with classrooms and mock trial rooms, this will be a national example of how to get elementary school children interested in legal careers. The solicitation programs will be going out shortly. Please give when you receive your letter as part of the JLTLA Foundation's Capital Campaign.

As the kick-off event for the JLTLA Career and Community Center, we will hold the JLTLA First Annual Thurgood Marshall Awards Luncheon on June 30, 2006 at the Belo Mansion. As part of this event, the JLTLA Foundation is donating copies of the new book by Hill Harper, Letters to a Young Brother, MANifest Your Destiny to local schools as a mentoring tool ([www.letterstoayoungbrother.com](http://www.letterstoayoungbrother.com)).

## **DIVERSITY IN THE PROFESSION**

The minority bar associations in Dallas believe that minority attorneys are under represented in the Dallas firms. In order to determine whether these beliefs are statistically valid, the Dallas Asian Bar Association, Dallas Hispanic Bar Association and the J.L. Turner Legal Association are jointly

developing a Diversity Report Card. The report card will measure the number of total attorneys working for the firms, the number of minority attorneys in that figure, and the firms' diversity efforts. We can and must ask the firms to increase their efforts and show increased results their results when it comes to diversity. Companies like Wal-Mart have ended their relationships with law firms for failing to meet their diversity expectations. This report card will serve as a tool to reawaken the partnership between the firms and our associations. Together, we can produce a plan to solve this problem.

## **IN CLOSING**

Some of you may remember my closing from the 2005 JLTLA Gala, but maybe it's worth repeating:

While campaigning for this office, I asked the members what would J.L. Turner ask us if he were alive today: I imagine it being something like, "What are you doing to handle the business of black attorneys?:

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How are you making yourselves self-sufficient?

How are you supporting one another?

How are you giving back to the community?"

We must move beyond civic awareness to civic engagement.

In closing, I know that some will ask, why do you speak out on some these issues; some are controversial? First, as lawyers, we should never be afraid of controversy. And in answering why, I am reminded of the unknown poet, whose words were popularized by Rev. Jackson at the 1988 Democratic Convention:

I'm tired of sailing my little boat, far inside the harbor bar.

I want to go out where the big ships float, out on the deep where the great ones are.

And should my frail craft prove too slight for waves that sweep those billows o'er,

I'd rather go down in the stirring fight than drowse to death at the sheltered shore.

Let's tell our friends that JLTLA has set sail, but we need all hands on deck. Send a copy of the JLTLA membership form to your friends that have not joined yet. Let them know why they should. It will mean more coming from you than from me. The JLTLA membership form is available to be downloaded from the Membership Page of the J.L. Turner website at [jltla.org](http://jltla.org).

I remain sincerely yours,

Your humble servant,

**Frederick J. Barrow**

**President, J.L. Turner Legal Association**

**The African-American Bar Association of Dallas**