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Tribute to Professor Norman C. Amaker

Loyola University Chicago Law Journal

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Tribute to Professor Norman C. Amaker

The Law Journal dedicates this issue to the life and work of Professor Norman Amaker. As the materials that follow demonstrate, Professor Amaker was devoted to his family, his friends, his students, and the achievement of civil rights for all Americans. For all these reasons, the members of the Law Journal wanted to honor Professor Amaker.

To pay tribute to Professor Amaker, the Law Journal is pleased to publish pieces from a variety of authors. Professor Amaker’s family honored the Law Journal and the entire Loyola community with a letter, as did Nina Appel, the Dean of Loyola University Chicago School of Law and a classmate of Professor Amaker’s, and Neil Williams, a fellow professor at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. We have also included a speech given by Professor Drew Days, a professor of law at Yale University, in honor of Professor Amaker.

The Loyola University Chicago Law Journal, Volume 33 Staff
To the Loyola Family

The Amaker family would like to thank the faculty, staff, students and alumni of Loyola University for your generous support during Professor Amaker's illness and after his death. Your reaction told us that he was truly respected and loved by many. Your thoughtful acts of kindness helped us through a very difficult time. The memorial services, honors and recognition of his achievements by the University and students has given our family great pride and comfort.

We will always remember Norman as someone who was devoted to his family, his career and an advocate for civil rights. It is our sincere hope and prayer that his presence at Loyola encouraged some students to dedicate their legal careers to helping others.

The Loyola Family will always remain near and dear to our hearts.

Sincerely,
Mattie J. Amaker and Family
Curriculum Vitae of Norman C. Amaker

I. Positions

A. Professor of Law, Loyola University Chicago School of Law (Chicago, IL: 1976-2000)
B. Adjunct Professor, University of Maryland Law School (Baltimore, MD: 1972-1973); Visiting Professor of Law, Rutgers University School of Law (Newark, NJ: 1973-1976)
C. General Counsel, National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing (Washington, D.C.: January - August 1973)
E. Staff Attorney/First Assistant Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (New York, NY: 1960-1971)

II. Bar Memberships

A. Member of the Bar of the State of New York
B. Member of the Bar of the District of Columbia
C. Member of the Bar of the United States Supreme Court
D. Member of the Bars of several federal Courts of Appeals and District Courts throughout the United States

III. Activities

A. Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of MFY Legal Services
B. Board of Directors of the Hudson Guild
C. Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Citizens Care Committee
D. New York City Bar Association’s Committee on Municipal Affairs
IV. Publications

A. CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CIVIL RIGHTS (Oceana, 1967)
B. CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION (Urban Institute Press, 1988)
E. The Reagan Legacy in Civil Rights, RONALD REAGAN’S AMERICA VOLUME ONE (Greenwood Press, 1997)
F. The 1950’s: Racial Equality and the Law, CURRENT HISTORY, Nov. 1969
Tribute to Professor Norman C. Amaker


J. Reorganization of the Civil Rights Commission and its Aftermath: A Retreat from Conscience, 12 LOY. Q. OF PUB. ISSUES (Fall 1987)


M. Some reflections on the Baker-McKenzie Incident, CHICAGO ALL LAW SCHOOLS NEWSPAPER ISSUE, Spring 1989


V. Education

Amherst College, Amherst, MA, B.A. 1956, cum laude
Columbia University, New York, NY, J.D. 1959

VI. Honors and Awards

A. Selected as Loyola University Chicago's Faculty Member of the Year, 1995 (only member of the law school faculty ever chosen)

B. Distinguished Visiting Professor, William Mitchell Law School, St. Paul, MN, Spring Semester, 1996

C. I.B.P.O. of E.W. Award, 1965

D. B.A.L.S.A. Award, 1976

E. Chicago City Council Resolution, 1995
Reflections on the Life and Work of Norman C. Amaker

Dean Nina Appel

Professor Norman Amaker was my classmate, my colleague, and my friend. For all of us who were privileged to have known him, we knew a person of great courage, integrity, passion, and commitment. He was above all committed to the cause of civil rights, and equality, and at the same time he was a person who was, in the very best sense of the word, truly "color blind." Nevertheless, he grew up in a world that was not. Always brilliant, always talented, Norman was the only African American at Amherst in the 50's and then again, the only African American at Columbia Law School. With his own sharp sense of humor, he was fond of saying to classmates at various alumni reunions, who rushed over to him, remembering him... "Sure you remember me. Who are you?" and then laughing, along with everyone else. Experiences which might well have embittered a lesser person, simply made him more compassionate, and more wise. One of his favorite expressions was "This is a redeemable soul," something he truly believed true of most people.

It was 1976 when he began teaching at Loyola. Prior to coming to our faculty, he had served with great distinction in a variety of roles. Upon graduation from law school, Norm joined the staff of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund; in 1971 he became Executive Director of the Neighborhood Legal Service Program in Washington, D.C. He taught at the University of Maryland Law School and at Rutgers Law School in Newark, New Jersey.

Professor Amaker was a scholar. His main interests lay in Constitutional Law and in Civil Rights. In addition to scholarly works, he wrote and published personal reflections of his own experiences as a lawyer for the plaintiffs in numerous civil rights actions, challenging discrimination in public schools, public accommodations, jury selection, voting, capital punishment and employment. He represented thousands of protest demonstrators across the South (including the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Birmingham and Selma, Alabama), and argued scores of cases before federal and state trial and appellate courts, and
before the United States Supreme Court. All these experiences formed a basis for his teaching. The students first were afraid of him, because of the rigor of his demands; they soon understood that he was not a person to be feared, but rather to be admired, and emulated. As Chair of the Law School’s Re-Admissions Committee he was a “soft touch,” ready to hear with compassion why a student had failed to live up to his or her potential; more often than not he issued a stern warning, and another chance. Few students disappointed his faith in them. Not surprisingly, he was selected as the Faculty Member of the Year by a university-wide committee.

Norman Amaker was an early African American law professor. He recognized his responsibility as a mentor to other minority professors, and co-founded the Midwestern People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference, which meets annually to critique scholarship generated by minority law teachers at Midwestern law schools. Loyola proudly continues our sponsorship of this Conference in his memory.

His memorial service was all that he would have wished, and all that I wished for him. People came to Loyola from all over the country to pay him honor. Former colleagues, students and friends spoke of what he had meant in their lives. I believe his own children were surprised at the numbers of lives he had influenced and inspired.

It is difficult for me, personally, to recognize that he is indeed gone. I admit passing his office, where the door was once always open and he was always “in,” and being struck over and over with his absence. His students and colleagues have decided that for us, at least, the commemoration of Dr. King’s birthday (a date Norman himself shared with pride) will always be linked to the memory of Professor Norman Amaker. I am honored to write about my friend Norm for this special issue of the Law Journal. I know he would be pleased.
Remarks Upon Accepting the First Norman C. Amaker Award of Excellence on January 24, 2002.

Professor Neil Williams

Shortly after his death, one of my colleagues remarked that Norman Amaker gave meaning to the term “larger than life.” Indeed, Professor Amaker had a regal bearing about him, a commanding presence that was distinct, unique, and uplifting. He spoke with a booming eloquence that transfixed any room he was in, particularly when that room happened to be a classroom. In fact, Professor Amaker was regarded as a particularly rigorous and demanding teacher. Loyola students took pride in rising to meet Professor Amaker’s high expectations. They greatly admired and appreciated the unique perspective on law Professor Amaker shared with them, particularly when they came to realize that he had such a heart of gold. Professor Amaker enjoyed returning the affection of his students, serving many as a compassionate mentor and guidance counselor. For example, without fanfare, he spent countless hours tutoring students in academic difficulty. He also had a profound interest in mentoring younger colleagues who entered law teaching. To this end, Norman co-founded the Midwestern People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference, which meets annually to critique scholarship generated by professors of color at Midwestern law schools. Following Professor Amaker’s example, legal scholars in other regions of the country have organized similar scholarship conferences. I and many other professors of color on law faculties throughout the country would not be where we are but for Norman’s considerable influence. It was with great respect for Norman that I delivered these remarks upon accepting the first Norman C. Amaker Award of Excellence on January 24, 2002.

When Dizzy Gillespie, the great jazz trumpet player, heard that the venerable Louis Armstrong had passed away, his response was simple, straightforward and to the point. He said: “NO HIM, NO ME.”1 Mr. Gillespie recognized that without Louis Armstrong’s example, without

his trail-blazing contributions and sacrifices, the world in which Dizzy practiced his artistry would not exist. As Louis Armstrong was to Dizzy Gillespie, Norman Amaker is to me.

To paraphrase Dr. King, “All men and women have the capacity for greatness. Not for fame, but for greatness. Because greatness is achieved through serving others.” By this measure, Norman Amaker was among the greatest of men because he was a living embodiment of the ideal of service. Without Norman’s splendid example, without his mentoring, without his support, his sacrifice, his passion for justice, many practicing lawyers never would have received their law degrees, and throughout this country, many professors like me would not be on law school faculties. That the students have selected me to receive this award suggests that they believe I have taken steps along the path of service that Norman Amaker trail-blazed. I am honored that they feel this way. I hereby commit myself to stay on that path and to continue trying to do for others the way Norman did for me. **Norman Amaker. NO HIM, NO ME.** Thank you.

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Tribute to Norman Amaker

*Drew Days, III*

Mattie, Alicia, Alana and Arthur; Dean Appel, Faculty, Staff and Students of Loyola School of Law; Ladies and Gentlemen:

It may have struck some who received notice of this memorial celebration for our late departed friend, Professor Norman C. Amaker, as curious, if not inappropriate, that the Loyola University Chicago Law School had decided to schedule it for January 15, a national holiday set aside to pay tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the great civil rights leader and Nobel Laureate. In fact, nothing could have been more appropriate. At the most superficial level, it has to be acknowledged that today would have been not only Dr. King’s seventy-second birthday but also Norman’s sixty-sixth. More important, however, is the fact that woven into the complex fabric of Dr. King’s life is the story of one Norman Amaker, a young, bright lawyer at the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense Fund in New York City. For while Dr. King was effectively and movingly—through his powerful sermons and speeches, as well as his campaign of acts of civil disobedience and non-violent protests—shaking the country to its moral core, Jack Greenberg, Constance Motley, Norman Amaker and other LDF lawyers were providing him with legal counsel and seeking, to the greatest extent possible, to enlist the aid of the federal judiciary—from trial courts up to the United States Supreme Court—in forcing America to make good on its rhetorical commitment to the principle of “Equal Justice Under Law.”

Picture, if you will, April, 1963, when Dr. King began a major campaign in Birmingham, Alabama for desegregated public facilities, fair hiring, and a biracial commission. There were marches, picketing and sit-ins by civil rights demonstrators. Images of the black protestors—men, women and children alike—being set upon by Police Chief Bull Connor’s police dogs, beaten by police officers and dashed to the ground by powerful fire hoses, were flashed on television newscasts and spread on the front pages of newspapers around the world. Many were arrested on a variety of charges from parading without a permit to resisting arrest. Dr. King announced that he
intended, nevertheless, to march with his followers on Good Friday, April 12, and Easter Sunday, April 14. The City officials quickly obtained a state court injunction on April 11 forbidding King from marching without first obtaining a permit. Of course, even under the best of circumstances, it would have been difficult to obtain a permit in the short time before the scheduled march. King was served with the injunction shortly after 1:00 p.m. Thursday afternoon. But the City officials had no intention of granting such permission, in any event.

Dr. King was thus faced with a dilemma: if he marched, he opened himself up to being held in contempt for violating the state court injunction; if, however, he failed to march on Good Friday, he risked losing whatever momentum his efforts had generated in Birmingham to effect change, as well as the powerful moral and religious message marching on the day commemorating Christ’s crucifixion and death would send to the Nation and the world. One historian of the Civil Rights Movement\(^1\) recounts the following occurrence during that time:

Norman Amaker, an NAACP Lawyer from New York, briefed King and some two dozen movement leaders early on Good Friday morning, April 12. Crowded into the sitting room of King’s Room 30, the only suite in the Gaston Motel, they heard Amaker say that the [state] injunction was probably unconstitutional, but that anyone who violated it would probably be punished regardless. Whatever King decided to do, Amaker said in closing, the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund would stand behind him in court.\(^2\)

At that time Norman was only twenty-eight years old and not quite four years out of Columbia Law School! After Dr. King decided to March on Good Friday and was, as Norman predicted, arrested and jailed, another eminent historian reports:

Unbeknownst to King, movement attorney Norman Amaker tried to see him at the jail Friday evening. The jailers told Amaker he could meet with King only with guards present. Amaker had protested this denial of a private conversation and refused to accept a monitored one.\(^3\)

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2. Id.
Dr. King remained in jail for over a week during which he wrote his now famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail,"⁴ a stinging rebuke to those white clergy in Birmingham who were calling for local blacks to withdraw from participating in further civil rights demonstrations, characterizing them as "unwise and untimely."⁵ As King wrote, "I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say 'Wait.'"⁶

Norman's interaction with Dr. King tells, I think, a more profound story than only one about two black men, six years apart, both reared in a Baptist Church tradition—Norman at New Mt. Zion in Harlem; Martin King at Ebenezer in Atlanta—trying in their separate roles as lawyer and preacher to come to grips with the South's tenacious refusal to forsake its system of official racial apartheid, despite the United States Supreme Court's ruling in Brown v. Board of Education⁷ and other cases declaring such practices unconstitutional. It is also a story about the way in which the legal process and direct action movements can interact to effect societal change. LDF lawyers, careful and well-trained as they were, saw one of their principal roles as that of making Dr. King and other civil rights leaders aware of the limits of the law and of ways in which at least some objectives of the Civil Rights Movement might, nevertheless, be achieved within a legal system that had for centuries often served to frustrate black yearnings for equality. Dr. King and his associates, in turn, through their direct action and civil disobedience, forced LDF and other civil rights lawyers themselves to confront the fundamentally unfair and racist nature of a host of laws and legal procedures that had previously gone unchallenged. They found themselves required every day, in situations like that in Birmingham, to "think outside the box" and to "push the envelope" by what seemed like an ineluctable wave of demonstrations, protests and sit-ins by black folk fighting for their rights no matter what the cost.

Birmingham was only one of several places where Dr. King and Norman Amaker combined forces. Let me give one other example. In early 1965 demonstrations began in Selma, Alabama protesting the systematic denial of the franchise to blacks. Dr. King and thousands of

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⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., I Have A Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World 84-100 (James M. Washington ed., 1986); see also http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf (last visited Mar. 18, 2002).
⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., I Have A Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World 84 (James M. Washington ed., 1986).
⁶ Id. at 88.
other demonstrators were arrested. This initial effort had proven largely unsuccessful after three months of protests. In the interim, Norman and several other LDF lawyers had represented more than 3,400 protestors there against criminal charges. Thereafter, John Lewis, then head of SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee), and now a distinguished member of Congress from Georgia, decided to lead more than five hundred demonstrators across the Edmund Pettis Bridge, just outside Selma, on a fifty-mile march to Montgomery, the state capital, demanding the right to vote on a racially non-discriminatory basis. The group set out on a Sunday morning in early March only to be brutally attacked by state police and county sheriff's deputies. Among the seriously injured marchers was Lewis who suffered a fractured skull.

Dr. King, who had been in Atlanta when John Lewis began his march, decided that he would resume the journey, along with other protestors, to Montgomery. Norman and another LDF attorney were assigned the task of putting together the necessary papers to seek a federal court temporary restraining order barring Governor George Wallace and the county sheriff from interfering with the march. Although the request for the restraining order was denied, that legal filing set in motion a remarkable series of events: the involvement of the United States Justice Department; only a few days later President Lyndon Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress calling for the enactment of a national voting rights law;\(^8\) a preliminary injunction was granted, giving Dr. King what he had sought earlier;\(^9\) and the President nationalized the Alabama National Guard to ensure that Dr. King's march from Selma to Montgomery received tight security and was completed as originally planned without incident. In August, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act\(^10\) into law.\(^11\)

The obvious targets of the Civil Rights Movement were segregation in public schools, places of public accommodation and transportation and racially discriminatory denials of the right to vote. But it was (and still is in contemporary civil rights battles), as Norman clearly understood, fundamentally about the right to human dignity. That was what Rosa Parks' now famous story was all about. As you know, it was the refusal of that black tailor's assistant to obey an order to give up her

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11. This account of the Selma campaign is drawn in substantial part from JACK GREENBERG, CRUSADEERS IN THE COURTS: HOW A DEDICATED BAND OF LAWYERS FOUGHT FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS REVOLUTION 354-62 (1994).
seat on a municipal bus to a white man that sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. It was Dr. King’s first test of leadership as a force for civil rights. As Mrs. Parks said about the incident, “I was thinking that the only way to let them know I felt that I was being mistreated was to do just what I did—resist the order.” It strikes me that one of Norman’s clients who never enjoyed the fame that Rosa Parks gained had the same basic instinct as did she. In 1963, in an Alabama County courtroom the following occurred during the cross-examination of Norman’s client by the state prosecutor:

Q What is your name, please?
A Miss Mary Hamilton
Q Mary, I believe -- you were arrested -- who were you arrested by?
A My name is Miss Hamilton. Please address me correctly.
Q Who were you arrested by, Mary?
A I will not answer a question ----

By Attorney Amaker: The witness’s name is Miss Hamilton.
---- your question until I am addressed correctly.
THE COURT: Answer the question.
THE WITNESS: I will not answer them, unless I am addressed correctly.
THE COURT: You are in contempt of court ----

THE COURT: You are in contempt of this court, and you are sentenced to five days in jail and a fifty dollar fine. Norman understood what had gone on. He and his LDF colleagues, therefore, sought to have Miss Hamilton’s contempt citation reversed on appeal in the Alabama state court system. Meeting with no success there, they then petitioned the United States Supreme Court to hear the case. In the LDF brief which Norman co-authored, they wrote as follows:

Of course a racial caste status can be imposed in ways other than physical separation . . . . The crux of the matter is status, not spatial separation.

Petitioner’s reaction to being called “Mary” in a courtroom where, if white, she would have been called “Miss Hamilton,” was not a thin-skinned sensitivity. She was responding to one of the most distinct indicia of the racial caste system. This is the refusal of whites to

12. GARROW, supra note 3, at 12; see also DAVID L. LEWIS, KING: A BIOGRAPHY 46-50 (2d ed. 1978).
14. Id.
address Negroes with titles of respect such as "Miss," or "Mrs." or "Mr." and to refer to them as "boy" or "girl." The Supreme Court granted review and summarily reversed Miss Hamilton's conviction.

Yes, one can imagine the headiness Norman must have felt finding himself close to the center of the events in Birmingham and Selma and elsewhere that were to reshape American society profoundly. But, it also needs to be acknowledged that Norman's career at the Legal Defense Fund also entailed his handling, as did other lawyers on the staff, untold numbers of cases that were generated by the success of Dr. King's efforts and of the Civil Rights Movement generally. Dr. King's march on Washington in 1963 prodded the President and Congress to enact the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the most comprehensive such legislation since Reconstruction, outlawing racial discrimination in places of public accommodations, public schools, federal funding and private employment, among other areas. And I have already mentioned the genesis of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Someone had to ensure that those new rights on paper became realities on the ground. As a consequence, as computerized data base lists of Norman's cases attest, he was fully occupied during the balance of his tenure at LDF litigating school desegregation, public accommodations and voting, jury and employment discrimination cases from Georgia to Texas.

I owe Norman a personal debt of gratitude for the kindnesses he showed me when I joined the Legal Defense Fund staff in 1969. On my first day on the job, Norman invited me into his office, closed the door, put his feet on the desk and proceeded to share with me words of wisdom about law, lawyering and civil rights that I have always appreciated. And there were many more words of wisdom to come over

the course of our friendship. But I also am indebted to him as an African-American and we all owe him, as American citizens, for what he did to make this country a better place. Those of us who worked with him at LDF and at the Neighborhood Legal Services Program in the District of Columbia and his law school colleagues and many students have all been truly fortunate to have had Norman pass our way during his rich and productive life.