

CITY BAR REPORT

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News from the Bar Association of Baltimore City

Fall into Autumn With the BABC



BABC, President-Elect Ringgold-Kirksey

As the leaves begin to fall for the change of season, are you ready for your personal change of season? Fall is a great time of the year to renew and refresh your skill set and resume. Perhaps

you might want to indulge yourself with a CLE, take a pro bono case or join a new

committee. The BABC weekly email blast features upcoming events such as CLE's, pro bono opportunities and networking that are waiting for someone just like you to join in! Joining a new committee could expand your horizons to a different legal subject matter. This might peak your interest if you are teetering on a change in your career path.

Take inventory of the following committees: Criminal Law, Estates and Trusts, Family Law, Diversity, Personal Injury Litigation, Workers' Compensation, Health & Wellness, and Government and Public Interest just to name a few. Reach out to a chair or member to gain insight or a unique perspective you may not have been privy to. All this information can be found on the BABC website and is just a few clicks way! It just might give you the courage and inspiration to take the "fall".

Upcoming events to "fall" into: October 25th, Green Mount Cemetery November 5th, SLS Cabaret & Cabernet - Westminster Hall

November 7th, MSBA & BABC Mix &Mingle - The QG

November 22nd, National Adoption Day Ceremony/Celebration- Circuit Court, **Room 400**

Mitchell Courthouse 10:00 a.m. -Volunteers needed

November 25th, Past President's Luncheon-Lord Baltimore Hotel

December 3rd, BABC Holiday Party -The Inn at Henderson's Wharf

Finding Your Compass as a Lawyer: Lessons from Maryland's Legal Trailblazers



YLD Chair, **Derek Van De Walle**

If we ever feel ourselves drifting in practice, that's a good moment to stop and think: What brought me here? Why did I choose law in the first place?

In the moments you stray from

that path, Maryland's legal past offers us a compass in role models who turned adversity into progress. Below are just to name a few. Their lives remind us that lawyering is about advancing justice, not merely representing cases and clients.

Charles Hamilton Houston, an architect of justice.

Born in Washington, D.C., Charles Hamilton Houston left an indelible mark on Maryland through his role in dismantling racial segregation in education, public accommodations, and other areas. A World War I veteran, Houston returned from service to study at Harvard Law School, where he graduated cum laude and became the first Black student elected to the editorial board of the Harvard Law Review. He later became dean of Howard University School of Law and, soon after. the first special counsel to the NAACP.

In Maryland, Houston's name is forever linked to Murray v. Pearson, 169 Md. 478 (1936). There, he successfully argued that the University of Maryland School of Law could not deny admission to Donald Murray solely because of his race. That landmark victory cracked the foundation of Plessy v. Ferguson and laid critical groundwork for Brown v. Board of Education. Houston also carried the fight nationwide, winning Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada, 305 U.S. 337 (1938), which held that Missouri could not bar Black students from its law school without providing an equal in-state alternative.

Houston also took on civil rights battles closer to Baltimore. He joined the ACLU and others in representing Arnett Murphy in Durkee v. Murphy, 181 Md. 259 (1943), a challenge to segregated municipal golf courses. Although the Maryland courts initially upheld segregation, the issue returned to federal court in Law v. Baltimore, 78 F. Supp. 346 (D. Md. 1948). where a judge struck down the city's "separate" accommodations as unequal.

Beyond education and recreation, Houston pushed against segregation in every corner of civic life. Before the Supreme Court, Houston argued Hurd v. Hodge (1948), which prohibited the enforcement of "restrictive covenants" that would prohibit ownership of property based on race. In Kerr v. Enoch Pratt

Free Library, 149 F.2d 505 (4th Cir. 1945). he challenged discriminatory hiring at Baltimore's public libraries. In Goetz v. Smith, 191 Md. 707 (1948), he fought racially restrictive housing covenants. And in Norris v. Baltimore, 78 F. Supp. 451 (D. Md. 1949), he took on discrimination at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Houston's compass pointed toward systemic reform. He mentored Thurgood Marshall, his protégé at Howard and a Baltimore native, who would later bring Houston's vision to fruition in Brown v. Board of Education. Houston captured his philosophy in a line that still inspires generations of lawyers: "A lawyer is either a social engineer or a parasite on society." Suggested further reading:

- Genna Rae McNeil, Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights (Univ. of Pa. Press 1983).
- José Felipe Anderson, Genius for Justice: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Reform of American Law (Carolina Academic Press 2021).
- Larry S. Gibson, Young Thurgood: The Making of a Supreme Court Justice (Prometheus Books 2012).
- Richard Kluger, Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality (2024).

Etta Maddox, who opened the doors of the profession

Etta Havnie Maddox broke barriers to become Maryland's first woman lawyer, but only after forcing the law itself to

On June 6, 1901, Maddox graduated from Baltimore Law School, the first woman to do so. Soon after, she applied to sit for the Maryland Bar Exam. On November 21, 1901, the Court of Appeals decided In re Maddox, 93 Md. 727 (1901) and denied her application. The Court held that it lacked power to admit women without legislative action:

We are not to be understood as disparaging the laudable ambition of females to become lawyers. It is for the General Assembly to declare what class of persons shall be admitted to the bar. We have no power to enact legislation. Until then, we have no power to admit the applicant, and her request to be allowed to stand for examination must be denied.

The Baltimore Sun reported the setback the next day under the headline, "Bars Woman Lawyer: The Court Decides Against Miss Maddox." Maddox, undaunted, told the paper, "I am surprised, but not disappointed."

Determined, Maddox turned to the legislature, On January 23, 1902, Senate Bill No. 30 was introduced to amend the law to admit women to practice. Maddox herself testified before the Judiciary Committee. The Sun described the hearing in detail, noting the favorable reception Maddox received, and endorsed the measure in an editorial titled "Women at the Bar."

The bill passed both houses and was signed into law by the governor on April 8, 1902. The final version, Chapter 399, Section 3A of the Laws of Maryland of 1902, declared:

"Women shall be permitted to practice law in this State upon the same terms, conditions, and requirements, and to the same extent as provided in this Article with reference to men. No discrimination shall be made on account of race, creed, complexion or previous condition of servitude.

Maddox sat for the bar exam on June 18-19, 1902. In July, the State Board of Law Examiners notified her that she had passed "very creditably." On September 11, 1902, the Court of Appeals formally admitted her, and she took the oath before the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City on September 24.

Maddox argued her first case in Baltimore City Circuit Court No. 2 on December 14, 1904. Representing sixteenyear-old Gertrude Campbell in a divorce and alimony matter, she secured \$3.50 per week in alimony and a \$15 counsel fee. The Sun, covering her debut, noted that she "showed no trepidation" and "acquitted herself with credit." One witness, correcting himself from "No, sir" to "No, ma'am," provided a glimpse of how novel her presence in court remained.

Beyond the courtroom, Maddox was a tireless advocate for women's suffrage. She helped to found the Maryland Suffrage Association in 1894, and, starting in 1908, Maddox attended every session of the General Assembly to support suffrage bills. She drafted the first suffrage bill introduced in Maryland in 1910, and presided over its hearing before a packed crowd of 400 supporters, including National Association president Rev. Anna Howard Shaw.

Etta Maddox died on February 19, 1933, and is buried in Green Mount Cemetery. Her tombstone is marked with the scales of justice and bears the inscription:

Maryland's First Woman Lawyer Etta Haynie Maddox Died February 19, 1933 Graduated in Law in 1900 Admitted to Practice Law in the State of Maryland in 1902 And the District Courts of the United States in 1911.

Her compass was persistence. As a suffragist, activist, and attorney, Maddox

forced open the doors of Maryland's courts. Every woman lawyer in Maryland today walks through the door she created. Suggested further reading:

- In Re Maddox, 93 Md. 727 (1901)
- Maryland Women's Bar Association, Leading the Way: Women in Maryland's Legal History (2004).
- Battaglia, Lynne A. (2011) ""Where Is Justice?" An Exploration of Beginnings,' University of Baltimore Law Forum: Vol. 42: No. 1, Article 2 (available at: https:// scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/lf/vol42/ iss1/2)

Simon Sobeloff, moral authority with a judicial temperament

Simon Sobeloff, a Baltimore native and graduate of the University of Maryland School of Law, rose from Baltimore City Solicitor to U.S. Attorney, Maryland Court of Appeals Judge, and Solicitor General of the United States. In Brown II (1955), it was Sobeloff who urged the Supreme Court to require desegregation "with all deliberate speed."

In 1953, Simon Sobeloff faced a defining test in the case of Dr. John Peters, a Yale professor dismissed from a government contract after anonymous "lovalty" accusations. Sobeloff concluded the program violated due process and refused to defend it, knowing the stand was politically dangerous. His decision cost him what many believed would have been his chance at the U.S. Supreme Court. Instead, after a bruising confirmation battle fueled by Southern opposition to his civil rights record, he was appointed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. By choosing conscience over ambition, Sobeloff upheld constitutional principle at the expense of the highest judicial prize.

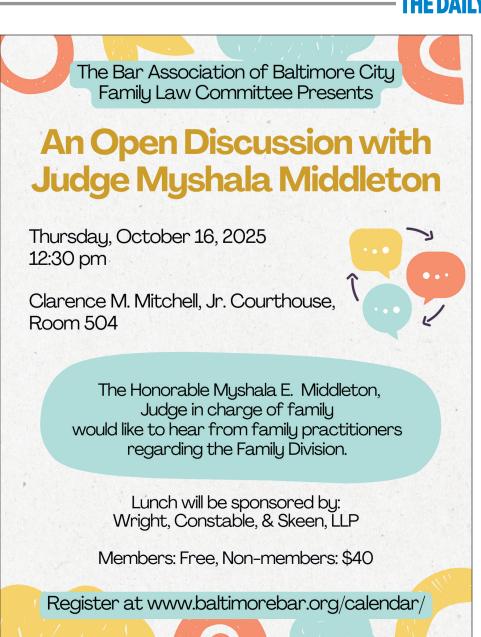
As Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, Sobeloff presided over cases enforcing civil rights in resistant Southern states. His opinions were models of clarity and fairness.

Further Reading:

- Rosen, Sanford Jay. "Judge Sobeloff's Public School Race Decisions." Maryland Law Review, vol. 34 (1974): 498-531
- Wallerstein, Morton L. The Public Career of Simon E. Sobeloff. (Marlborough House, 1975).

Juanita Jackson Mitchell - Justice in the Community

In 1950, Juanita Jackson Mitchell became the first Black woman to practice within the Maryland Bar. She used her license to fight for civil rights in Baltimore's neighborhoods.





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If you are interested in becoming a Sustaining Member, please contact Karen Fast at kfast@baltimorebar.org.





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