



Civil Rights Division Association Newsletter Issue 3, April 2023

The Civil Rights Division Association (CRDA) is a non-partisan organization composed primarily of former employees of the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, with current employees also welcomed and encouraged to join. The CRDA Newsletter is intended to provide members with information on CRDA activities, member updates, and information about the work of the Civil Rights Division.¹ We are very excited to be able to stay connected with CRDA members and encourage member networking. Still need to join the CRDA? Just click to the [CRDA website](#)!

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¹ The CRDA is a membership organization and is not affiliated with the U.S. Department of Justice or any other government agency. Any views expressed in the CRDA Newsletter are those of the author or organization.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

We invite you to share any news or personal updates for the CRDA Newsletter! This includes news about family and/or personal activities, job changes, interesting career posts, publications and retirements. We also invite creative submissions, too! Creative submissions and/or reflections should be no longer than 500 words, and can be:

- Insights on interesting experiences during your tenure with the Division;
- Photos of memorable events with a brief summary of the event;
- Thoughts on, with links to, recommended books, articles, and other publications pertaining to civil rights; and
- Reviews of books, movies or other media content focused on civil rights history and policy.

Please send your information to CRDA Newsletter Editor Lisa Wilson Edwards at CRDANewsletter@gmail.com. Starting this month, the Newsletter will be distributed bi-monthly. The deadline for submissions to the next Newsletter is May 15, 2023. The next Newsletter will be published in June 2023.

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DIVISION ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

"The FBI In Peace And War"

By Jerry Norris*

Growing up in the fifties, I'd always been taught that FBI agents were heroes of law enforcement. They were lawyers, trained after law school to be intrepid investigators. They were the personification of Truth and Justice -- not to mention The American Way.

Like a lot of things, the real-world version didn't quite live up to the legend. First of all, there wasn't a lawyer in a carload. Not back in the 1960s, when I was myself a lawyer, working with FBI agents all the time. The oft-repeated story that "most" agents were trained in the law was just that -- a story.

No matter. A well-trained agent didn't need a law degree to be a competent investigator. I met plenty of able FBI agents in my time at the Justice Department. The Bureau's competency quotient was no worse, and probably no better, than that of any other group -- for example, my fellow lawyers in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

But the agents were a fascinating lot. I worked with one older agent who lived near Selma, Alabama. He shared all the values of his white Alabama neighbors, and he openly and loudly objected to what he regarded as the disruptive work of the Civil Rights Division.

This man was my official link to the county school systems we were investigating in south Alabama. The idea that I'd have to get my facts about a school system's segregationist practices from this extraordinarily conservative man gave me serious heartburn.

But -- surprise! His reports were objective, complete, and frequently damning. Perhaps my agent was not "all eaten up with The Cause," but he was a professional investigator first.

Many of the younger agents I met had a strong cowboy streak and were fully invested in the Ephram Zimbalist Junior-G-Man image of the job. Their attitude toward the Civil Rights Division was simple: Voting rights investigations were boring. They ought to be out working bank robberies, or at least interstate car-theft cases.

But their duty sometimes required that they work with Civil Rights Division lawyers in the field -- and robbed banks be damned. For a period of weeks, four agents accompanied me, the lone Division lawyer, on a county-by-county investigation of voter registration practices all through Alabama. It was 1965, and a statewide suit was in progress, seeking a far-reaching court ruling to require county voting officials to register black voters.

Evidence-gathering for that lawsuit required that each county Voter Registration Board be visited, so that tens of thousands of past voter registration applications and literacy tests could be photographed on microfilm.

Later, back in Washington, there would be hundreds of hours devoted to painstaking inspection of these microfilm tapes -- looking for evidence of disparate treatment of black and white citizens who had attempted to register to vote.

The Xerox Corporation had not yet brought simplicity and convenience to the world of copying pieces of paper. My FBI contingent and I traveled with a large, cumbersome camera, built to be assembled and dismantled time after time, so that the lens was suspended, pointing downward, over a portable platform. One FBI agent would spread page after page of voter registration forms, a single page at a time, under that camera, while another agent snapped the picture.

On a good day, we could do the records of two small counties. I would locate and identify the records to be photographed, and the team of agents would snap the pictures. I didn't blame them for being bored: The work was tedious and resembled the factory assembly line work that some of them, probably, had struggled through college to avoid.

It was difficult to relate to these young men. They were J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, and I was a Presumed Bleeding-Heart Liberal. They were young, but I was even younger, and yet, here I was -- the one calling the shots. The work was repetitious and the list of counties to be visited seemed unending. The motels we stayed in, night after night, were mostly second-rate and located in no-name towns buried deep in the piney woods.

I did my best, though, to garner at least a modicum of trust and tolerance from the crew, sometimes saying and doing things that I might not have said or done, had one of my regular colleagues been there to hear me. (I don't know what the slang term is for that kind of behavior today. In those days, it was called "kissing up". My attitude was, anything to get the job done and get on home.)

One day, I found myself sharing lunch with two of the agents in a nicer-than-usual riverside cafe, somewhere south of Demopolis, Alabama. I was being politely tolerated, but the two agents were conversing mostly with each other.

"Today's The Director's birthday," one of them observed. (J. Edgar Hoover was never referred to by an agent, at least in my presence, other than as "The Director." Both words were spoken in caps.)

I was amazed that anyone would know when Hoover's birthday was. I didn't know, or care, when my own boss, the Attorney General, had been born. Lincoln. . . Washington. That was about it for me for politician's birthdays.

But I held my tongue.

"Did you send him a gift?" responded Agent Number Two. Surely, he was kidding! I emitted a tentative little snort of appreciation, but then held my breath -- just in case.

You never knew about these guys.

"No . . . just a card," Agent One answered.

The realization came -- just in time. He was being entirely serious. They both were. You didn't kid around about The Director.

I gritted my teeth to avoid the derisive guffaw that threatened to destroy me as Temporary Leader of this small band of brothers. To laugh now, it occurred to me, might set Alabama voting rights back by a decade.

A few days -- several county courthouses -- later, the word came down. Congress had at last passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The new law contained faster and more effective means of desegregating the voter rolls than ever could be accomplished with litigation. Evidence-gathering in our statewide lawsuit was suspended -- never to be resumed.

My overjoyed crew of agents dropped me off in Selma and lost no time returning to their home base, dreams of bank robbery investigations no doubt dancing in their heads.

I would never see any one of them again.

Now, many decades later, I wonder what became of them, and whether they ever look back on their days of wrestling the heavy overhead camera rig in those musty old county courthouses. I wonder if any of them take belated pride in having played a small-but-measurable role in the transformation of their country.

Maybe they didn't send a gift; but they sent a card.

**Jerry Norris was an attorney in the Civil Rights Division from 1965 to 1969. He is an amateur writer and has published several war stories about his days with the Division!*

CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION NEWS

Here are updates of recent Civil Rights Division news. More details can be found on the Division's [website](#).

Division Resolves Investigation Of Race And Sex-Based Harassment Of Vermont School District Students



The Department announced on March 16, 2023, a settlement with the Twin Valley School District in Vermont to resolve an investigation of student-on-student harassment based on race and sex. The investigation focused on the school district's responses to allegations of peer harassment and use of derogatory epithets and comments based on students' race, sex, sexual orientation, and sex stereotypes from the 2019-2020 school year to the present. Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke stated that the agreement "will help ensure that Black and LGBTQ students can thrive in a safe and supportive educational environment going forward. No student deserves to be subject to unlawful and harmful bullying or harassment, especially once they enter the schoolhouse door."

Division Files Statement of Interest Jointly With Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in Appraisal Discrimination Case



The Department and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) filed a [Statement of Interest](#) in a lawsuit pending in U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland alleging that an appraiser and lender violated the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) by lowering the valuation of a home because the owners were black and denying a mortgage refinancing application based on that appraisal. The Department and CFPB filed the Statement to explain the application of the FHA and ECOA to lenders relying on discriminatory home appraisals. The case is *Connolly et al. v. Lanham*, Civil Action No. 1:22-cv-02048-SAG.

DIVISION ALUMNI NEWS AND UPDATES

Here are updates from some of your former Division colleagues:

Hugh Moore served as an attorney in the Educational Opportunities Section from 1970 to 1973. He fondly remembers working with, and learning from, Brian Landsberg, Tom Keeling, Julian Tepper, Joe Rich, and many others. Hugh states that he worked on desegregation and teacher discrimination cases in Georgia, Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, and Texas. He was a part of the team, led by Joe Rich, that investigated and tried the Austin, Texas desegregation case. His work on the Georgia statewide case included the discovery and investigation of the Baker County case, where a county school board used public assets to establish a segregated private school. He has been in private practice in Chattanooga, TN for more than 45 years. Hugh was recently awarded the Jac Chambliss Lifetime Achievement Award at the Chattanooga Bar Association's 125th Annual Meeting. The award is given to an attorney demonstrating the highest standards of the legal professional in Chattanooga. Hugh has deep ties to the legal community in Chattanooga. He is a past board member of the Chattanooga Bar Association, was the former chairperson for the Tennessee Supreme Court's Advisory Commission on the Rules of Practice and Procedure and is a founding master of the American Inns of Court, Brock-Cooper Chapter. Hugh served as president of the Federal Bar Association, Chattanooga Chapter, and has acted as the grand jury foreman for Hamilton County. He has been inducted as a Fellow of the American, Tennessee, and Chattanooga Bar Foundations, as well

as the American College of Trial Lawyers. In addition, Hugh currently serves on the Criminal Justice Act Mentor Panel and the Board of the Orange Grove Foundation. Hugh received his LLB from Yale Law School, and his BA from Vanderbilt University. He can be reached at hmoore@chamblisslaw.com.

Jessica G. L. Clarke was an attorney in the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section from 2010 to 2016. On March 16, 2023, she was confirmed by the United States Senate to serve as a judge with the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. After leaving the Division, Jessica worked as an attorney at a law firm for three years, and from 2019 to 2023, she served Chief of the Civil Rights Bureau at the New York State Office of the Attorney General, overseeing the Bureau's civil rights work. She received her J.D. from the Ohio State University, Moritz College of Law, and B.A. from Northwestern University.