



**Civil Rights Division Association
NEWSLETTER
Issue 4, June 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 invite creative submissions and reflections, too! Creative submissions and 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; and
- Thoughts on or reviews of books, articles, movies or other publications pertaining to civil rights history and policy.

*Please send your information to CRDA Newsletter Editor Lisa Wilson Edwards at CRDANewsletter@gmail.com. The Newsletter is published bi-monthly. **The deadline for submissions to the next newsletter is July 15, 2023.***

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DIVISION ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

"A Long Wait"

By Jerry Norris*

The aging federal courthouse in Selma, Alabama differed little from hundreds of other Depression-era public buildings in towns all over America.

Except history was about to be made inside.

The building sat on a treeless patch of pavement on Alabama Avenue, one block over from Broad, the main street through Selma. Just behind the courthouse, a single city block away, was the Edmund Pettus Bridge, made famous by the police riot that had occurred there just five months earlier, during the abortive Selma-to-Montgomery March.

Directly across the avenue was the Dallas County Courthouse. Thus, the town's two most prominent public buildings faced off in a manner symbolizing the long-simmering contest of political wills that now was boiling over -- in Selma and throughout the region.

On this August day in 1965, all attention was focused on the federal side of the street. A long line of people -- all of them black -- could be seen facing the front doors, their slow-moving line streaming down the low stone steps, then northward on the sidewalk for the half-block distance to Lauderdale Street, then around the corner -- where the line ended another hundred yards eastward toward the Alabama River.

The already-notorious Sheriff Jim Clark and several of his deputies stood contemplating the scene from outside the County Courthouse. They were, perhaps, hoping for some sign of disorder so that they might cross over and make things right.

But the people in the long line waited quietly and patiently in the sweltering late summer heat. Unseeable from Sheriff Clark's vantage point, their line extended inside the building through the main post office gallery all the way to the wide staircase at the north end.

On up the staircase the line continued -- three or four people abreast -- doubling back on itself at the wide stairway landing, and then onward and upward again to the second floor. In the upper corridor, the line continued the entire length of the building to where it ended at the last doorway to the right.

There, inside a small office, four men and women sat all day long at a wide table where they took down basic information from the black citizens of Dallas County, and issued them ID cards signifying their new status as voters.

During the first hour of that first day, the number of registered black voters in Dallas County, Alabama increased by five hundred percent.

As the day wore on, the line of people down the hall, down the stairs, out the door and around the corner remained uniformly long.

The line would form up again each morning and remain impressively long for several more days before the number of people registering to vote -- most of them for the first time in their lives -- would begin to level off.

Silently, a dramatic shift in political power was occurring.

The Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 had just been adopted. Dallas County was among a scattered few places in the southern United States where Federal Examiners had been sent in immediately. These were places where blatant past discrimination by local government made it clear that black citizens would never be permitted to register in significant numbers; not unless it was the Federal Voting Examiners who did the registering.

In that long line on that very first day stood a thin, bent man of obviously advanced age. He was in the company of a middle-aged woman and two younger women, all awaiting their first opportunity to exercise full rights of citizenship.

The man stood out in the crowd. He was white-haired and tall -- but stooped -- and he was very old.

I was one of a handful of young lawyers from the Justice Department working in Selma on that day. We had been very nearly overwhelmed by the dramatic turnout. It

surprised us because there was no great hurry, really. There was no election scheduled for that week or that month. The Voting Examiners were going to be in Selma for as long as it took to see that every citizen who wanted to register had been afforded the opportunity.

The local people knew that, but it didn't matter. They wanted to "reddish" on that day -- on that very first day that they could.

Walking along the line, I exchanged a few words with the old man, and asked him how old he was.

The woman answered for him. "He's ninety-four," she said. "He's my daddy."

Their little group was just inside the main entrance when I first spotted them. They were facing at least another four hours in line before they would reach the Examiners.

"I don't think any of these people here would object," I told the woman, "if I were to take you and your father up closer to the front of the line. I'm pretty sure none of these folks would mind that at all."

Before the woman could answer, the old man spoke up for himself. "Don't you trouble y'self, suh, I doin' fine, right here in the line. 'Been waitin' all my life for this day, and I reckon I can wait a little while longer."

Hours later, the Justice Department attorneys made some estimates, based on the progress being made by the Examiners. We determined that some part of the still-lengthy line would necessarily have to be cut off and sent away unsatisfied, so that the Examiners could close their office and go back to the motel for dinner and a night's rest.

Everyone at the line's cutoff point was given a careful, polite explanation: The line was just too long. The Examiners had worked hard all day. Tomorrow was, after all, another day, and all who returned, the next day or on a subsequent day, would be assured of their right to register.

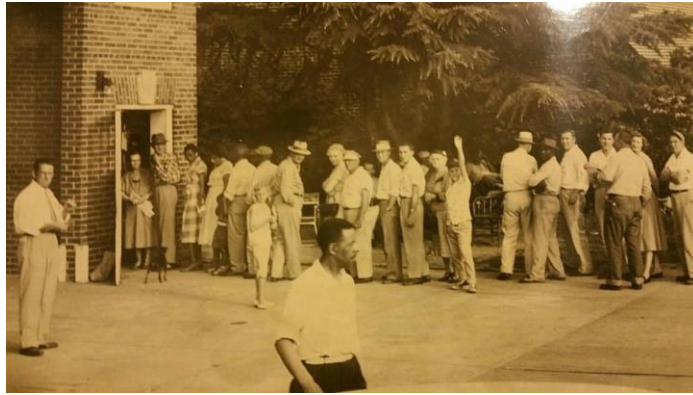
The ninety-four-year-old man and his family were still in line at that point. They had reached the top floor and were within sight of the doorway that led to the Examiners' office.

I made certain that we had cut off the line at a point well behind the spot where the old man stood waiting.

The Voting Examiners had a tough job and would be weary after their long first day. They were going to be having a late dinner.

But that old man was *by God* going to go home that night as a registered voter in the State of Alabama!

*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.



Pictured in foreground is William J. Wilson, Sr. (grandfather of Division Alum Lisa Wilson Edwards) after paying a poll tax and voting in Portsmouth, Virginia in the 1940s.

CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION NEWS AND UPDATES

Here are summary updates of recent Civil Rights Division news. More details can be found on the Division's **website**.

Division Announces Agreement In Environmental Justice Investigation Of Illegal Dumping In The City Of Houston



On June 6, 2023, the Division announced that it had secured a settlement agreement in an environmental justice investigation into the City of Houston's response to illegal dumping in Black and Latino neighborhoods.

"No one should have to live next to discarded tires, bags of trash, rotting carcasses, infected soils and contaminated groundwater, all caused by illegal dumping," said U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Texas Alamdar S. Hamdani, whose department conducted the investigation in collaboration with the Division. Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke said in a written statement that the agreement "will ensure that Houston fully addresses chronic illegal dumpsites, provides access to adequate waste management

services and improves quality of life in communities of color.” The agreement announced Tuesday requires the city to address illegal dumping through the city’s recently launched “One Clean Houston” initiative - especially in Black and Latino communities — through rapid cleanup, better enforcement, and educational outreach.

Division Obtains Agreement With Liberty County Sheriff’s Office Resolving Race Discrimination Complaint Filed By Delaware State University



On May 15, the Division announced an agreement with the Liberty County (Ga.) Sheriff’s Office (LSCO) to resolve a race discrimination civil rights complaint under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The agreement pertains to a complaint from Delaware State University (DSU), a historically black university, alleging that the Sheriff’s Office discriminated against its student athletes, athletic coach and driver when it conducted a racially discriminatory traffic stop in Georgia of a bus chartered by DSU. DSU alleged that after the stop, the predominantly Black passengers in the bus were questioned and personal belongings searched, including through the use of a drug-sniffing dog, and that this constituted unlawful race discrimination in violation of Title VI. Under the agreement announced by the Division, LSCO will review its bias-free policing policies, make necessary updates to its policies on traffic enforcement and searches, and develop and implement data collection procedures, among others.

DIVISION ALUMNI NEWS

Here are updates from some of your former Division colleagues:

John and Jean Rosenberg served in the Division in the 1960’s. John was an attorney and first Chief of the Division’s Criminal Section and Jean was a paralegal in the Division. The couple left the Division in 1970, and relocated to the Town of Prestonburg, Kentucky where they devoted themselves to improving the lives of people of Appalachia. They were recently honored by the Town of Prestonburg with a mural at newly named “Rosenberg Square” which expresses the open mindedness, inclusion and compassion that the Rosenbergs have brought to their community for years. Local coverage of “Rosenberg Square” and an interview with the Rosenbergs can be seen here: [Prestonburg’s ‘Rosenberg Square’ celebrates community champions \(wymt.com\)](https://www.wyvt.com/story/news/local/ky/2020/05/15/prestonburg-ky-rosenberg-square-celebrates-community-champions/3184444002/).

John was born in Magdeburg, Germany in 1931 and is a Holocaust survivor. He lived with his family at an internment camp in 1939, in Rotterdam, Holland. They were released in 1940 and fled to New York. After college, John joined the Air Force for two years before going to the University of North Carolina Law School. He joined the Civil Rights Division in 1962, where he and Jean met.

In the Division, John and Jean worked on the earliest voting rights cases, including the murder of three voter registration workers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, in Mississippi. John worked on the prosecution team that charged 18 individuals with civil rights violations for the murders; seven persons were convicted. In 1965, with passage of the Voting Rights Act, John was involved with enforcement of the law, including suits seeking the removal of poll taxes and literacy tests across the south. John and Jean left the Division in 1970, and John joined the then-newly formed Appalachian Research and Defense Fund (later known as AppalReD), in Kentucky that provides legal representation to the poor in Appalachia. John served as Director of AppalReD for 28 years, leading the organization's efforts at addressing many devastating environmental and coal mine related issues such as black lung disease, abusive land use practices, and disfigured mountain tops caused by strip-mining. He advocated for compensation for injured and impaired workers, and legislation that would regulate surface mining to reduce erosion and water pollution.

The Rosenbergs have been widely recognized for their work in Appalachia, and John has received numerous awards for his legal work: a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Lawyer Magazine, the Kentucky Bar Association Distinguished Lawyer Award, the American Bar Association Difference Makers Award, the American Bar Association Grassroots Advocacy Award, and recognition from the ACLU of Kentucky for his leadership at AppalReD.



John and Jean Rosenberg

Christopher Lomax was an attorney in the Criminal Section from 2008 to 2013. Chris currently practices law in South Florida ([Lomax Legal](#)), and recently appeared on local CBS Miami News discussing the indictment against former-President Donald Trump. The interview can be seen here: [South Florida attorney on Trump indictment - CBS Miami \(cbsnews.com\)](#).

Laura Coates was an attorney in the Voting Section during the Administrations of Presidents Bush and Obama. On May 5, 2023, she was promoted to CNN's Chief Legal Analyst. Laura has played a central role in the network's extensive legal programming, serving as an anchor for CNN's prime time programs, substituting regularly for Don Lemon on his former daily show "Don Lemon Tonight," hosting impactful specials and a CNN Town Hall. Laura covered the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, the January 6th hearings, the two impeachment hearings of President Donald Trump. Laura also hosts "The Laura Coates Show" on SiriusXM's P.O.T.U.S. channel where she interviews world leaders and politicians on the intersection of politics and the law. She is the New York Times Bestselling author of "Just Pursuit: A Black Prosecutor's Fight For Fairness" and "You Have The Right, A Constitutional Guide To Policing The Police." Laura received her B.A. from Princeton University, and J.D. from University of Minnesota Law School.



CNN Chief Legal Analyst Laura Coates

Joel Finkelstein worked as an attorney in the Division in 1965 and witnessed the signing of the Voting Rights Act. Joel's reflections on that historic event are captured in a series published in USA Today on June 7 called, [Voting Rights Portrait: History's witness \(usatoday.com\)](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/06/07/voting-rights-act-50th-anniversary/1234567890/). After graduating from Cornell Law School, Joel joined the Division in 1964 where he helped draft the Voting Rights Act. He recalls that "it was a time when some of the nation's best young lawyers sought work at the Justice Department" and where he worked with then-U.S. Solicitor General Thurgood Marshall, and Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights John Doar. More of Joel's reflections are here: [Young lawyer who helped write voting rights bill 'star-struck' as he witnessed 1965 signing into law - ABC News \(go.com\)](https://www.abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=1234567890)



Joel Finkelstein with a pen that President Lyndon Johnson used to sign S. 1564, the Voting Rights Bill of 1965 into law

Division alums **Jared Fishman, Roy Austin, and Christy Lopez** came together on May 2 on the campus of George Washington University to discuss Jared's newly released book, "Fire on the Levee." Jared's book follows the federal investigation into the mysterious murder and burning of Henry Grove in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and the years long battle to achieve justice for his death, and other post-Katrina New Orleans cases involving the Justice Department. The panelists discussed their careers in the Division in 2009 and how they have evolved personally and professionally since, why the Henry Glover case still matters, and solving problems facing the criminal justice system.



Division alums Jared Fishman, Roy Austin and Christy Lopez at GW University

IN MEMORIAM

The CRDA is saddened to share news of the passing of this Division alum:

Burtis Marshall Dougherty, Jr.
February 16, 1949 – April 23, 2023



Burt Dougherty served the Division for over 42 years. Burt's work in the Division was enduring and significantly impactful in protecting the rights of persons facing unlawful discrimination.

Burt joined the Division's Education Section in 1974 after graduating from law school. On day one in the Division, Burt met Salliann Messenger who became his wife of almost 47 years! In the Division's Education Section, Burt litigated numerous school desegregation cases, helping make the promises of *Brown v. Board of Education* a reality for thousands of public-school children. In the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section, he helped develop the protocols for DOJ's fair housing testing program and successfully litigated many of the Division's housing and lending cases. Among those, he led a trial team that attained an over \$1 million verdict in a sexual harassment case against a landlord in *United States v. Veal*, still the largest DOJ fair housing verdict of its type. Most notably, he helped develop and negotiate *United States v. Countrywide Financial Corp.* on behalf of Black and Hispanic borrowers, which led to a \$335 million consent decree that remains the largest fair lending settlement ever obtained by DOJ. For his exemplary work on that landmark case, Burt received The John Marshall Award from the Attorney General, the DOJ's highest award for outstanding legal achievements for litigation.

Burt was greatly valued by his colleagues. Shina Majeed, Chief, Housing and Civil Enforcement Section, observed "... every attorney soon learned they had won the lottery when they were assigned to a case with Burt. Because when you worked with Burt you truly worked with him. He never sought the limelight for himself. His focus was the case and helping less experienced attorneys develop their skills."

Burt valued the significance of his role as a federal prosecutor in the Division. He stated at his 2016 retirement, "There is no greater honor than to be able to stand before the Court and say, as a lawyer in this Division, 'I represent the United States of America.'"

Burt graduated from Yale University (Pierson College) and University of Virginia Law School in 1974 as a member of the Order of the Coif. He is survived by his wife Sallianne, his children Meghan Dougherty Pirozzoli (Ken), Kelley Dougherty Smith (Aaron), and Evan Marshall Dougherty (fiancée, Kate Keith), and five grandchildren.