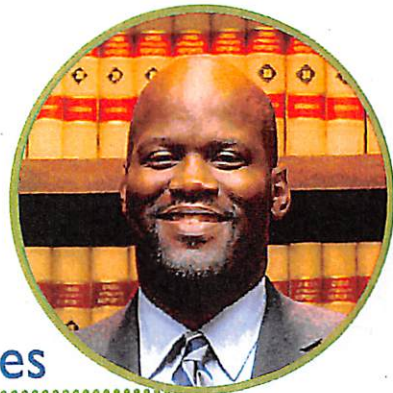


## BACK TO THE FUTURE: THANK YOU FOR A GREAT YEAR



Marlon A. Primes

It is hard to believe it has been one year since the start of my presidency and the launch of our theme for the bar year, “Back to the Future: Celebrating Our Past and Preparing for Our Future.” Those who are familiar with the trilogy of movies that inspired our theme and who have paid attention to the projects completed this year understand our theme was not designed to travel back in time and only marvel at the work and sacrifices of our ancestors. Instead, like the movie “Back to the Future,” we travelled through our history to help our bar association and legal community better navigate our present challenges and prepare for our amazing future.

### Celebrating our Past

To honor our past, John Lewis of BakerHostetler helped us launch the Legal Legacy Series in our *Bar Journal*, which has chronicled the outstanding accomplishments and history of iconic Cleveland lawyers, law firms, and legal institutions. Through the Legacy Series, we learned how BakerHostetler and other firms provided legal advice to help establish and guide many historic Cleveland businesses and institutions. We were inspired by the humble beginnings of Walter Haverfield, which was created from a chance meeting of the founding partners at the Ohio Bar Examination. Ulmer & Berne was established more than 100 years ago because Cleveland law firms refused to hire Jewish lawyers at that time. Ulmer’s initial office was so small that one of its two founding partners had to leave when the other partner wished to speak privately with a client.

We were also intrigued by the early growth of Thompson Hine from the interest founding partner Amos Burt Thompson took in specializing in a new federal law. His partners were skeptical about his endeavor, but they eventually relented. To their surprise, they later reaped the benefits of Mr. Thompson’s expertise in the new law, the Bankruptcy Act of 1898, as it allowed Mr. Thompson and other members of the firm to

successfully represent clients in Cleveland and across the country. We learned about the rich history of the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, which was one of the first of its kind in the country at its founding in 1905. Finally, we honored the memory of the late U.S. Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones in our Legacy Series and held a crowded reception in her honor with the Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta during International Women’s Day. If you have not already done so, please examine the amazing, informative, and inspiring 11-part series at [CleMetroBar.org/President](http://CleMetroBar.org/President).

Our Cultural Legacy Series allowed us to learn how the Irish, Italian, and Slovenian communities were founded in Cleveland, and learn about the outstanding lawyers and judges they helped produce. Our Past President Presents Series maintained our close connection to past presidents by allowing them to briefly discuss the highlights of their presidential terms. During the series, our CMBA board of directors learned about Hugh McKay’s founding of our award-winning 3Rs program, Steve Kaufman’s outstanding stewardship of our bar association’s move to the Galleria, Carter Strang’s creation of the position of Vice President for Diversity and Stokes Scholars, and David Kutik’s strategic plan and creation of the Bar Leadership Institute. We also learned from Jay Milano, the former president of the Cuyahoga County Bar Association (CCBA), about the history behind the merger of the CCBA and the Cleveland Bar Association (CBA) into the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association (CMBA). Mr. Milano taught us that the CCBA was founded in 1927 because of the perception that the CBA was not always inclusive of attorneys from small firms and/or from diverse religious and racial backgrounds. Thus, we were reminded that we must always be mindful of diversity and inclusion, and we should never forget the work and sacrifice of our outstanding prior leaders.

### Meeting our Present Challenges

Our journey Back to the Future has also enabled us to take concrete steps to ensure the current version of our bar association and overall legal community are inclusive and welcoming to all members of our diverse legal profession. Consequently, we entered into a historic memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the local bars of color, which will provide them with storage space, the use of the CMBA mailing address, and modest administrative support from the CMBA. In exchange, the bars of color, which have local, regional, and national networks, will help us attract and retain attorneys of color in our bar association and legal community. At the American Bar Association’s Bar Leadership Institute for current and future presidents of bar associations, the MOU was recognized as an innovative program that should be replicated around the country.

Managing partners and attorneys with hiring authority attended our Diversity and Inclusion Masterclass Series and learned about the importance of establishing an effective diversity committee, best practices for retention and recruitment of a diverse workforce, and best practices for business development for minority partners and associates. We also created an online diversity directory to allow general counsels around the country to locate, hire, and retain local law firms that employ outstanding attorneys of color.

Our inaugural Veterans Day program honored attorneys who have served in the military, and all members of our legal community learned how to provide volunteer legal services for local veterans in need. Because many attorneys with military backgrounds work in the local, state, and/or federal government, they will be able to take advantage of our revitalized Government Lawyers’ Section, which is working to create a veterans subcommittee.

Our four-part movie night series was preceded by an hour of free continuing legal education that allowed members to honor the courage of the late Justice Thurgood Marshall during Black History Month and celebrate the vision of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg during Women's History Month.

Finally, we created separate forums to facilitate important discussions with physicians and journalists during our annual Medical/Legal Summit and our inaugural Media and Law Summit. The Medical/Legal Summit, which was co-sponsored by the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio, featured American Bar Association President Bob Carlson and American Medical Association President Dr. Barbara McAneny. For the Media and Law Summit, Ohio University's E.W. Scripps School of Journalism secured the participation of Pulitzer-Prize winner Wes Lowery of the Washington Post and journalists who cover the White House and the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. Both summits helped our overall community address and rationally discuss current challenges that jointly impact our honored professions such as: the state of medical malpractice litigation, the Affordable Care Act, and the media coverage of high-profile litigation.

#### Preparing for our Amazing Future

Although we celebrated our past and have taken steps to meet our present challenges, we have not lost sight of the importance of preparing for our future. This year, we formed our 2040 Task Force to prepare for artificial intelligence (AI) and the ways it will change how lawyers practice law. The IBM Ross Intelligence System and other AI products can write briefs, create contracts, and review millions of pages to immediately assess litigation risks. The 2040 Task Force is currently a subcommittee of the new Cyber Security, Data Privacy & Emerging Technology Section and will help prepare members of our legal community for the changes AI will bring.

Last, but certainly not least, we held an inaugural program to jointly welcome to our legal community law students and faculty from Case Western Reserve School of Law and Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. The students and faculty enjoyed the networking opportunity and the ability to learn more about all the CMBA programs and initiatives. It will certainly help us ensure that a new generation of leaders is ready, willing, and able to maintain our tremendous legacy and history.

I have enjoyed working closely with so many of you during the past bar year. Together, we celebrated our past, addressed our current challenges, and laid the framework for an amazing future. I am passing the baton to my successor and fellow Ohio University alumnus Ian Friedman, and I am sure he will do an outstanding job maintaining our current pace and lifting our bar association and legal community to even greater heights.

So, now that my CMBA presidential journey is done, it is only fitting to conclude where we started one year ago with the final words of my CMBA inaugural address — "Back to the Future."

*Marlon A. Primes has been a CMBA member since 1993. He previously served as: a member of the Board of Trustees, the Chair of the Litigation Section, the Chair of the 3Rs Committee, and the Chair of the Justice for All Committee. Marlon has worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Cleveland for the past 26 years. He received his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center and his undergraduate degree from Ohio University's E.W. Scripps School of Journalism. He can be reached at (216) 622-3684 or Marlon.Primes@usdoj.gov. Follow him on Twitter @MPrimesCMBA.*

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