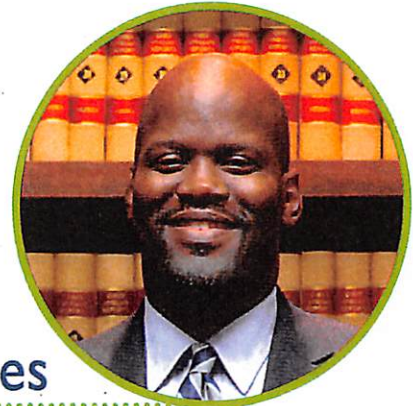


BACK TO THE FUTURE

Celebrating Our Past and
Preparing for Our Future



Marlon A. Primes

*Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
Annual Meeting
Inauguration Speech of
President Marlon Primes
Friday, June 1, 2018
Cleveland Marriott Downtown at Key Center*

I. INTRODUCTION

Our theme today is “Back to the Future.” Of course, you remember the iconic trilogy of movies with the lovable and eccentric Professor Emmett Brown, his DeLorean time machine, and the unwitting time traveler, Marty McFly. Remember?

It is only fitting that in honor of our theme, we go back about 100 years ago, when a tall, determined, and handsome young man in rural Georgia began planning his path to northeastern Ohio to create a new beginning for himself and his family. It was a journey without the technology that we have grown accustomed to today and without many of the luxuries of the last century. It involved a two-day train trip to northeastern Ohio. He landed work at one of the tire factories in Akron. Although he had a menial job, he dressed impeccably because he knew that a brighter day was coming for himself and his family. Although barely literate, he sometimes visited the local courts and observed the legal proceedings. So today, about 100 years later, it is a testament to the determination, strength, and vision of George Primes, Sr., and his wife Annabelle that they can look down from heaven and see that their grandson is an attorney and the president of one of the largest and most prestigious bar associations in our country.

But, for our purposes today, what is important about George and Annabelle Primes’ story is that it is the story of northeastern Ohio. Many of your relatives also made their ways to northeastern Ohio from the Jim Crow south, or the Emerald Isle, or behind the Iron Curtain, or from so many other parts of the globe. They

faced tremendous odds and many headwinds, but their determination and foresight led them here to benefit future generations of relatives that they would barely know or never meet.

Those new residents were the muscle behind the factories of so many Fortune 500 companies that dotted our landscape — factories that made northeastern Ohio an industrial giant and the envy of other cities and regions around the world.

Our companies created a number of firsts in our nation. We had the first mall in the country, located a short distance from here at the old arcade. We had the nation’s first business park, which was founded by General Electric Lighting and literally lit up the entire world. We also were the birthplace of Standard Oil, which was one of the largest companies in the world. Its founder, John D. Rockefeller, was said to be so powerful he could personally set the global price for oil.

We also have the distinction of playing an important role in establishing the national philanthropic community because the United Way and the Cleveland Foundation began in our city.

Cleveland also was one of the national leaders when it established the metroparks and a legal aid society.

Although our theme today is “Back to the Future,” you do not need Professor Emmett Brown’s time machine to understand that all of that success was, in part, because of Cleveland’s vibrant legal community. One hundred years ago, our law firms were among the largest in the country. Jones Day, Squire Sanders, Baker Hostetler, and Thompson Hine were founded in Cleveland, and they and other Cleveland firms were the national model of the 20th century law firm. Our legal community was so sophisticated that it formed a bar association in 1873, five years before the American Bar Association was founded. The leaders of our legal community also established the Ohio State Bar Association in our city.

So, if you go back to the future and look at our history in the context that each generation of Clevelanders runs a leg of a relay race in their respective era, the rich history of northeastern Ohio demonstrates that our ancestors had a very big lead when they passed the baton to us.

They gained the lead and set many national standards through a simple recipe for success: working hard at their respective places of employment to make a better day for their families and their colleagues; and working together with attorneys from different employers to create and maintain institutions to help current and future generations of Clevelanders.

Those are precisely my goals for the coming bar year and the goals of the strategic plan of our bar association. We hope to help our lawyers continue to provide the best service to their clients by providing cutting-edge legal training and networking opportunities, and work together as a cohesive legal community to maintain our bar association and other institutions for our benefit and the benefit of current and future Clevelanders.

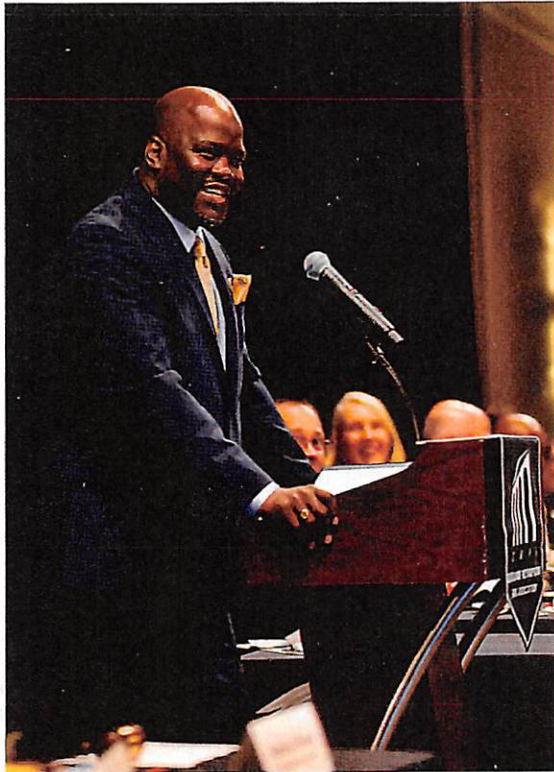
During this bar year, we hope to reach those goals by creating a unique historical series that will honor and recognize our past accomplishments, continuing to offer programs to bring our law schools and our legal community closer together, building on our momentum to be thought leaders by creating a symposium to help us continue to improve and enhance our legal system, and continuing to promote diversity and retention.

II. PLANS FOR THE BAR YEAR

A. Honoring and recognizing our past accomplishments

1. History project

As I previously stated, we have a rich legal history in Cleveland. However, we should do a better job



sharing our story. This year in our Bar Journal, we will highlight historical Cleveland lawyers that have made our community better than they found it. The series will be coordinated by attorney John Lewis and will profile icons such as: Newton Baker, who not only founded the Baker Hostetler law firm, but also served as Cleveland's mayor and was the modern-day equivalent of the U.S. Secretary of Defense; attorney Lloyd O. Brown, a partner at Weston Hurd who was one of the first African-Americans to serve on the Ohio Supreme Court, and who created a foundation that helped so many law students pay for their legal education; former Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones, who was one of the first African-American woman in the country to serve as an elected county prosecutor; and so many other outstanding men and women from our city that have made our community stronger. The profiles will not only share important stories about our past, but they will also inspire current and future generations of leaders in our legal community to walk in their footsteps.

B. Providing innovative ways to foster cooperation

2. Cooperation

One of the reasons our ancestors were successful in creating our bar association and so many other institutions was because of the spirit of cooperation between attorneys at different employers. We will try to replicate that spirit of cooperation by hosting one of the first receptions for law students from Case Western Reserve Law School and Cleveland-Marshall College of Law on September 13, 2018.

Our research has shown that 70 percent of the lawyers in our community went to law school locally, and our community can only benefit when future lawyers and future leaders get an early opportunity to interact with one another. Irrespective of where you went to law school, the outside world simply views us as Cleveland lawyers. So, why not promote that type of cooperation that will hopefully spread to other segments of our legal community? We all will certainly reap the benefits.

I can also tell you from my personal experience of attending law school at Georgetown that I greatly benefitted from interacting with students from other law schools in the D.C. area. It made me a better person and enhanced my knowledge and overall educational experience. We want to extend those opportunities to the future leaders of our Cleveland legal community.

C. Being thought leaders by promoting better understanding and respect for the rule of law.

3. Innovation

A simple spin in our "Back to the Future" time machine reveals that one of the past accomplishments of our community was recognizing a need and creating a new model to address the concern. That is how the United Way and other philanthropic organizations were established in Cleveland.

Similarly, in our internet and social media age, there is no better time to help our communities get an accurate view of what we do in the legal profession. We are certainly overdue for a candid discussion about what we can do to make our judicial system more just and more accessible. Consequently, in cooperation with my alma mater, the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, we will hold a unique media-law summit, where we will explore how the media and lawyers can work together to develop the best practices to promote the rule of law, the fair and efficient litigation of legal disputes, and a better understanding of our legal framework.

During our summit, we will have a panel of some of the most outstanding journalists in the country, including a live remote with Pulitzer Prize winner Wes Lowery of The Washington Post, and live appearances from the former editor of The Akron Beacon Journal and journalists that cover the U.S. Department of Justice and the White House for The Washington Post and USA Today. We will also have a panel of some of my colleagues at the U.S.

Attorney's office and other outstanding litigators that will share the best practices for litigating high profile cases in the social media and internet age.

D. Promoting diversity and retention.

4. Diversity and retention

Last, but certainly not least, our "Back to the Future" time machine reveals that the unfinished business of the last century is finding new and innovative ways to promote diversity in our legal profession. We still need to make more progress in that area.

Our bar has made important strides with our outreach programs through the stewardship of our Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Foundation. We have the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Summer Legal Academy to teach a diverse group of high school students about the legal profession. Our Stokes Scholars program continues the momentum by working with college students and steering them into the legal profession.

Our minority clerkship program helps a diverse group of first-year law students obtain opportunities to work for many legal employers throughout our city.

Brandon Brown began working with the bar association when he was in seventh grade, and he was able to participate in those pipeline programs. I am so proud that Brandon has completed law school, and he has a license to practice law in Ohio. I believe Brandon is here today. Let's give Brandon a round of applause.

As a result of our pipeline initiatives and Brandon's outstanding example, we have 10 other students from our bar programs in law school, and we have two additional law school graduates. We look forward to all of them joining our legal profession and becoming a part of our Cleveland legal community.

In addition to our pipeline programs, we need to make sure we are doing everything we can to promote the retention of a diverse work force. With Gregory Guice, our vice president for diversity and inclusion, I have met with the presidents of the local bar associations of color and have explored ways to promote diversity and retention.

One new idea from our meeting is in regard to recognizing that we have leaders of Fortune 500 companies in New York and many cities around the country who are saying they sell products to a diverse population and want a more diverse group of attorneys to handle their legal work. Since attorneys now practice law across state lines, those companies are willing to hire diverse attorneys outside of their respective states. Our challenge with retention is to find ways to inform those companies that we have an outstanding group of attorneys of color in Cleveland who can do their legal work across the country. If our



diversity committee is successful in creating a legal directory or helping to facilitate a discussion between the general counsels of those companies and our outstanding attorneys of color, it could result in additional legal business coming to our city and provide another important incentive to promote and retain a diverse work force.

The potential project with general counsels from around our country will not be an easy project to complete. I realize that. It will be difficult, and it will certainly require the brightest minds in our diversity committee and throughout our bar to create a new national model and to make it a success. However, as we know from our "Back to the Future" time machine, ingenuity and creating new models is the story of northeastern Ohio. It is our birthright and a part of our historical DNA. So, let's get it done this bar year!

The project is also imperative because it reflects the current reality in our legal profession. General counsels from around the country will tell you they are currently being evaluated based upon whether they are able to hire a diverse group of attorneys to handle their company's legal cases. Therefore, to address the current reality, our diversity committee will need the support of our entire bar to create diversity programs and share best practices to help interested local firms meet and exceed the diversity requirements that general counsels are now imposing.

III. CONCLUSION

Well, today, we began our journey 100 years ago in rural Georgia. It is only fitting that we conclude by focusing on 100 years from now

in Cleveland. At that time, the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association will be celebrating its 111th anniversary. Absent a real DeLorean time machine or a medical marvel, none of us will be there. However, when we run our leg of the relay race in our respective era with the determination to benefit our current and future relatives and colleagues and work to uplift our bar association and other institutions, we do not run alone. We are guided by the winds of our faith, and we stir the echoes of George and Annabelle Primes and your ancestors, who run beside us during our journey, while whispering the names of some of our greatest icons: Newton Baker, Lloyd O. Brown, Stephanie Tubbs Jones, and so many others. Although we may grow weary and face an occasional headwind, we can rest assured, knowing that if we follow the recipe of success of those that have gone before us, we, too, can pass the baton to a new generation of

Clevelanders with our families, our employers, our bar association, and our community in a much better place than we found them.

Thank you.

Now, 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.

preminent (prē'emənənt) adj. 1. authoritative. 2. commanding great respect. 3. possessing superior wisdom and skill.

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