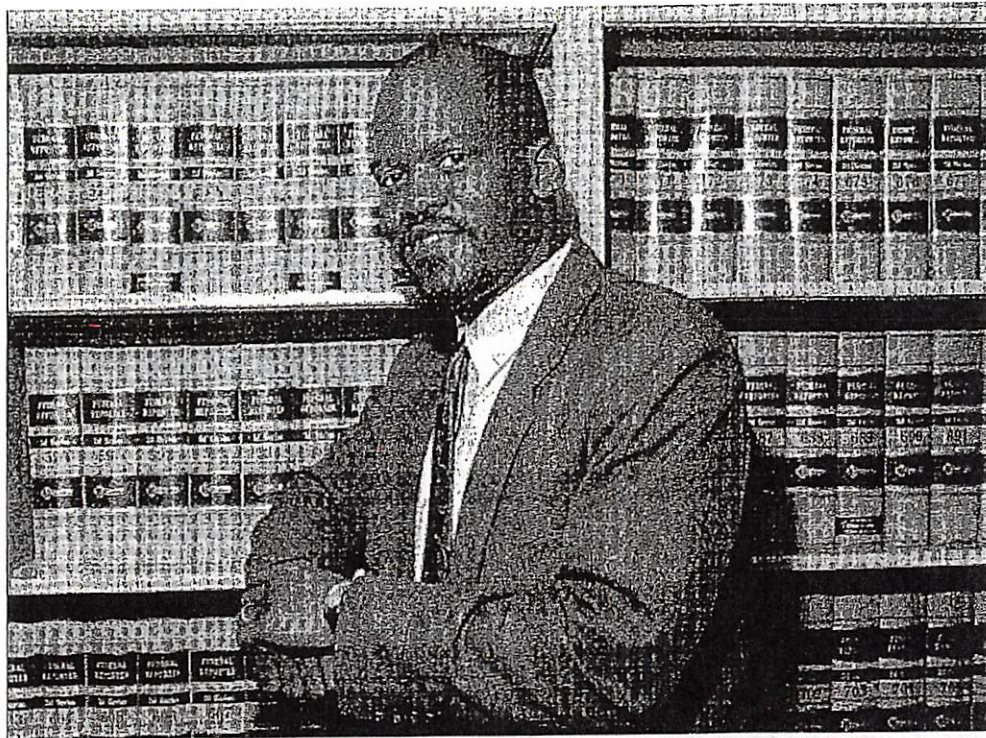


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'Take-charge' attorney puts spark in black lawyers' group



ROADELL HICKMAN / PLAIN DEALER PHOTOGRAPHER

Marlon A. Primes, a trial attorney for the Justice Department, is increasing the community involvement of the Norman S. Minor Bar Association, a Cleveland association for black lawyers.

Marlon A. Primes has breathed new life into the Norman S. Minor Bar Association, a Cleveland association of black attorneys.

The 33-year-old trial attorney for the Department of Justice in Cleveland has spent the past year establishing a mentoring program with the Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School and the bar association. He has also created a mentoring program with black students at area law schools and formed a committee to address the concerns of black attorneys at predominantly white law firms.

"He's a take-charge kind of guy. We've tried to establish a majority firm committee in the past, but Marlon was able to make it happen," said Carmen R. Adams, an associate at Calfee Halter & Griswold and president-elect of the association.

The majority firm committee

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is comprised of 49 associates and partners from 18 Cleveland firms. The committee is a way for fledgling associates to seek advice from seasoned colleagues and discuss their professional concerns.

"I remember when I was an associate, and sometimes it can be difficult talking to other associates or partners about your concerns," said Primes, a graduate of Georgetown University Law School. "Majority firms are recruiting black attorneys, but they aren't staying there very long."

Since Primes became president of the Minor Bar Association last July, here have been meetings and seminars on how to reach partner status and how to land corporate clients.

"The committee gave us an opportunity to talk with the few black partners at majority firms in Cleveland and find out how they're been successful," Adams said.

The Minor Bar Association also helped 12 law school graduates last year prepare for the Ohio bar exam. And it held a seminar on nontraditional jobs that are available for law school graduates.

"Helping law students is important to the organization" Primes said. "But the projects we've sponsored could not have been done without the help of other people."

After graduating from law school in 1989, Primes worked for a Columbus law firm and then was an attorney for Columbus Life Insurance before coming to Cleveland in 1992.

Primes, who grew up in Akron, lives in Cleveland Heights with his wife and two children.