KEEPPING UP WITH JIM JONES: PIONEER, TASKMASTER, ARCHITECT, TRAILBLAZER

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It is a special honor to have this opportunity to celebrate Professor Jim Jones’s pivotal role in integrating the ranks of the law professoriat. Jim Jones was of course not the only one who hoped that the number of minority law professors would swell as the number of law graduates increased, but unlike those who simply watched and waited, Jim Jones decided to actually do something about the infamous “pool problem” in legal education.¹

Through his innovation, mentoring, and dogged advocacy, Jim Jones put action to passion, quietly, deliberately, and diligently creating a pipeline of minority law teachers. I know that, at least for me, and most likely for every other Hastie Fellow, were it not for Jim Jones, we would not have the careers that we do.

This Tribute provides us all with the opportunity not only to express profound gratitude to Professor Jones, but to consider the implications of his visionary leadership in the context of the contemporary challenges we now face.

As is always the case with trailblazers like Jim Jones, there are stories to tell, and I certainly have a few. Beyond that, however, I would like to dig a little deeper to think about how we recover the contributions of Jim Jones and others like him—the race men and women of the twentieth century²—in the current milieu of post-racialism. Those of us in the post-segregation generation probably know many elders like Jim Jones. It might have been an elementary school teacher, a college professor, or even a public figure whom we admired from afar. Neither exclusively liberal nor moderate, conservative nor radical, the common denominator in race men and women was that they straddled the fence between being and doing, illustrating through thought and deed what it

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1. See Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking Back to Move Forward, 43 CONN. L. REV. 1253, 1265 (2011) (discussing how Harvard, typical among most law schools, approached the pool problem as an evolutionary approach, watching to see who would eventually emerge).
2. “Race men” and “race women” are twentieth century colloquialisms used to refer to black intellectuals and leaders who prototypically embrace a stance towards their racial marginality with a mix of race pride and commitment to lifting others as they climbed. See generally HAZEL V. CARBY, RACE MEN (1998) (investigating, inter alia, W.E.B. Du Bois’s status as a “race man”).
means to deliver body and mind in the service of a people. This way of attending to race seems old school these days, particularly in light of newer ways of thinking about how race frames cause. I want to think about how to lift this legacy up—to find ways of bringing it forward to reground and inspire us to confront the sobering realities that await our attention.

MEETING JIM JONES

I heard about Jim Jones weeks before I met him, and what I was told scared me to bits. It was 1984, and, having joined other student activists in protesting the status quo at Harvard Law School, it was time for me to consider what kind of career was in store for me. Corporate practice was just not an option—I had learned early on that while some things came easy for me, adapting to the culture of mainstream law firms was not one of them. Equally importantly, like many good advocates, I had become a passionate believer in the case we law students were building against contemporary legal education. As many of us saw it, not only was law school a site of meaningful struggle around the terms through which American race relations would be legitimized or transformed, law teaching and scholarship were also important sites of contestation in the ongoing efforts to transform American society. 3 Extending the reach of integration to legal education also provided another pressure point to ensure that the transitory nature of law student activism might be augmented by a longer term presence behind the podium.

Law school deans and administrators were well aware that the voice of student protest posed only an intense but ultimately weatherable storm that would pass with one easy word: graduation. I had decided a year earlier that I rather fancied this idea of being a law professor. Not only was I impressed by the enormous intellectual freedom they seemed to have, I was mesmerized by the ability of some of my more famous professors to use their law school classrooms as mock jury pools, as focus groups and mini law firms full of eager associates to articulate the

3. See Duncan Kennedy, A Cultural Pluralist Case for Affirmative Action in Legal Academia, 1990 Duke L.J. 705, 728 (arguing that “[a] much larger minority intelligentsia should produce more scholarship about the legal issues that have impact on minority communities. The subject matter of scholarship is determined at present by the unregulated ‘interest’ of academics. What we decide to write about just ‘flows naturally’ from our backgrounds, education and individual peculiarities. I think it is obvious that some significant proportion of minority intellectuals would be led in this way to write about minority legal issues. The precedent for this is the creation of modern civil rights law by black lawyers who devised the litigation strategy of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It would be farfetched to argue that the race of these lawyers was irrelevant to their choice of subject matter, or that the black civil rights cause would have evolved in the same way had all the lawyers involved been white.”).
right answer to legal problems that, unknown to us, were cases of first impression. Engaging us to chase as-yet-unsettled theories and arguments was generative for our professors and it prompted me to wonder: was it possible to use the classroom in a similar fashion to explore theories about race and law? I could only imagine what kinds of projects were possible when one does not have to worry about choosing cases to pay the bills. Intellectual freedom—what is thy name? Tenured law-professorship.

The only challenge—and I mean that only in the same way a 200-pound man can be called Tiny—was that I had no idea how to become a law professor. During all the heady times of my working with other students to pull together teach-ins, write petitions and briefs, and even create and facilitate an “alternative course” at Harvard Law School, none of our faculty allies ever suggested, hinted, or inquired whether I might want to pursue a career in law teaching. Somehow that possibility never materialized while I was at Harvard, so I was left to drift in a sea of desire without a clue about how to navigate these waters.

Then one day I saw a poster announcing the Hastie Fellowship at the University of Wisconsin Law School. Thankfully, I had just taken A. Leon Higginbotham’s seminar on Race and American Law, so my recognition of the first African American Court of Appeals judge for whom the fellowship was named stopped me dead in my tracks. It was like the poster was talking to me:

Pssstttttt, hey YOU! Yes YOU!! You say you want to be a law teacher, but let’s face it, you haven’t the remotest clue of how to go about it, and from where I sit, it doesn’t look very likely that you’ll sort that one out. But here, just maybe, is a program for you.


5. William Hastie earned his LL.B. from Harvard University in 1930 and his Doctorate in Juridical Science from the same institution in 1932. Linda T. Wynn, William T. Hastie (1904–1976), TENN. ST. U. Libr., http://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/hastie.htm (last visited Mar. 21, 2013). He was Assistant Solicitor at the Department of the Interior from 1933–37 and Judge of the District Court of the Virgin Islands from 1937–39, making him the United States’ first African American federal magistrate. Id. He was the Dean of Howard University School of Law from 1939–46. Id. He served as the first African American Governor of the Virgin Islands from 1946–49. Id. He was a civilian Aide to the Secretary of War from 1940–42, but resigned from his position in 1943 in protest of segregation and discrimination in the armed forces. Id. In 1944, he supported the position of the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax. Id. He was appointed to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in 1949, the highest position held by any African American at that time, and became Chief Judge in 1968. Id.
I read the announcement at warp speed, and I probably took the poster with me to meet with one of the few professors there who seemed amenable to thinking through this possibility: Duncan Kennedy.

While he knew nothing about the program, he did know David Trubek, his former law professor who was Director of the Institute for Legal Studies at Wisconsin, whom he rang up as I sat there to explore the possibility. An application followed, and in short order, a trip to Madison was arranged. I was told that I would meet David Trubek, Bill Whitford, Dirk Hartog, a few more members of the committee, and then Jim Jones. The way they said it . . . “Jim Jones” . . . told me that this was really the interview that counted.

**But what was it about Jim Jones that his name was spoken with a pregnant pause as a chaser?**

My other interviews went well—I talked about a few research ideas I wanted to pursue as a Hastie Fellow; one was an interrogation of both conservative and liberal takes on civil rights that would eventually be my thesis and first published article. And the second was something I was still trying to conceptualize that pertained to the interaction of race and gender discrimination. I had a few cases that seemed puzzling, but I really didn’t know what I was talking about at the time. I just knew that I wanted some time to figure out how to talk about it.

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6. **David Trubek: Professor of Law Emeritus, U. Wis. L. Sch.,** http://www.law.wisc.edu/profiles/dmtrubek@wisc.edu (last visited Mar. 21, 2013). (“David M. Trubek is Voss-Bascom Professor of Law Emeritus and a Senior Fellow of the Center for World Affairs and the Global Economy (WAGE) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A graduate of UW-Madison and the Yale Law School, Professor Trubek served as law clerk to Judge Charles E. Clark of the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals and as Legal Advisor to the USAID Mission to Brazil . . . . He joined the UW Law School faculty in 1973 and served as Associate Dean for Research from 1977 to 1984. During this period he also was Director of CLRP, the Civil Litigation Research Project, which was supported by the US Department of Justice. In 1985 he founded the UW’s Institute for Legal Studies which he directed from 1985–90. Trubek was appointed as University Dean of International Studies in 1990 and became the founding director of the UW-Madison International Institute in 1995. After stepping down as Dean and Director of the Institute he was Director of WAGE from 2001 to 2004 . . . . He has . . . published articles and books on the role of law in development, human rights, European integration, the changing role of the legal profession, and the impact of globalization on legal systems and [mechanisms of] social protection . . . . He has also contrib[ed to the literature on] critical legal theory, the sociology of law, and civil procedure.”).

7. **See Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law, 101 Harv. L. Rev. 1331 (1988).**

Folks were worried. I was talkative and probably a tad provocative, but would I survive Jim Jones? If I was just blowing air, he would call me out. One thing was clear: this interview was not a conversation that I would be able to charm my way through. I had to convince Jim Jones that I was a law professor in the making. This fellowship was a precious resource, and Jim Jones just did not suffer wannabes lightly.

Well, what is a girl to do when the stakes are high, you are nervous and unsteady, and do not know how to get your act in order? Tried and true for me was to call my mom, which I surely did before I went to meet Professor Jones.

Now my mom, Mariam Williams Crenshaw, was, as they said at the time, “something else,” a fierce advocate, a school teacher in what we now call an “urban school,” a disciplinarian, a cultural historian, the person who would not let any student graduate from her class without knowing all the verses of the Negro National Anthem,9 and who also would bring lotion and Afro sheen to school so that students could groom themselves in the privacy of her office before the start of the day. And, having come of age as her father’s driver as he delivered babies and tended to the medical needs of their community, she would often return to those very same homes for nearly fifty years, making her own house calls to engage parents of the students who were not living up to their potential. A loving standard-bearer in inner-city education, she was the embodiment of “tough love” long before it became sullied by its association with punishment rather than high expectations.10 She was a race woman, and Jim Jones was apparently her counterpart at the University of Wisconsin. Neither one of them tolerated underachievement, but at the same time, their hearts beat for students and they were both tireless advocates for them.

I called my mom to talk about my interview with Jim Jones as though he was some kind of puzzle. Halfway through my anxious entreaties for advice, she lost her patience. “Don’t you realize who this man is and what he has done to provide you this opportunity?” It was then that I realized that talking to Jim Jones could not be any more


10. Typical of a punitive articulation of “tough love” is the Hollywood variety of the failing urban school in need of a principal with a big stick. LEAN ON ME (Norman Twain Productions & Warner Bros. Pictures 1989), featuring Morgan Freeman, is perhaps the best embodiment of this genre. My own mother, and other “race men and women” like her, embraced a philosophy of high expectations in the context of culturally relevant and rigorous education.
challenging than growing up in a household of race men and women, a place where you were expected to speak up and to have something meaningful to say.

Hanging up the phone, I scolded myself for thinking that Jim Jones was out to get me simply because he was going to take me through the paces. I had been there before on any number of occasions with the range of irascible family members, organic intellectuals, advocates, and thought leaders in the community that raised me. Of course I am not going to say that at my interview Jim Jones was warm and fuzzy, or that he embraced me like a loving uncle. He was not and he did not. But he did take me seriously. He did challenge me. He did listen to me. He did tell me exactly what he thought and I told him what I thought. We were off to a great start.11

Jim Jones had a steady hand in my early scholarship. Now certainly, we did not always agree—I am not sure he ever understood my attraction to Critical Legal Studies (CLS). I in turn did not get why, given his long history of fighting against discrimination through his work as a government lawyer, he was not a dyed-in-the-wool radical. We had spirited debates about his work as a labor lawyer and, as importantly, he introduced me to the entire literature on race and labor unions, to the inimitable Herbert Hill,12 and to the institutional history of affirmative action.13 This vantage point found a direct route into my work,

11. Importantly, Jim Jones was not a fan of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), the school of thought with which I was most closely affiliated. Later, when invited to address the Critical Race Theory conference, a school of thought that grew out of CLS, Jones expanded his critique to the large contingent of scholars of color. See generally James E. Jones, Jr., HATTIE’S BOY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A TRANSITIONAL NEGRO (2006).

12. Herbert Hill was an ardent supporter of early affirmative action programs, and an outspoken critic of union attempts to preserve seniority systems that contravened Title VII. See generally Herbert Hill, BLACK LABOR AND THE AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM: RACE, WORK, AND THE LAW (1977) (tracing black labor from the abolition of slavery through the 1960s and 1970s, masterfully weaving together legislative developments, administrative adjudications, federal policy shifts, and workplace practices pertaining to employment discrimination).

specifically in my growing understanding of the long history of racial exclusion in the labor movement and, by extension, within certain elements of the left. I had certainly learned the glorious history of the Wobblies in college, and my mom was a fierce supporter of the teachers union, but there was also the ugly underbelly of the AFL-CIO and their role in resisting integration of the skilled trades which quite directly set the stage for affirmative action. In all these discussions, I understood that Jim Jones was far from the conservative critic some made him out to be. Indeed, he was much more of a race activist than many advocates today who have refused to meet the specious claims of post-racialism with anything more than a shrug.

Being a race man, as it turns out, is itself a radical undertaking, especially in an institutional setting where there was little incentive to create interventions that worked. Moreover, to sustain it through years of contestation and the growing sense that the effort is obsolete reflected a tenacity that was Jim Jones’s hallmark. Jim Jones developed the Hastie Program in response to claims within the law school world that there were few minorities qualified to teach. And it must be said, given all the attention and energy that CLS generated in the ideological arena, that Jim Jones’s innovation has stood the test of time, proving yet again that a structural intervention—a project that actually creates a physical on-ramp into legal education—has a unique legacy to which we all can attest.

Importantly, as the high standards imposed by people like Jim Jones attest, racial justice and high achievement are not in opposition. In fact, it is a page out of the anti-affirmative-action book to suggest that the advocacy of the past was something other than high-performance pragmatism. Indeed, the hallmark of Jim Jones and the Hastie Fellowship itself was recognizing that high performance, without a way to crack the barriers to opportunity, is nothing more than teaching into the wind. Race men and women like Jim Jones know that affirmative action works where structural innovation and high-level preparation meet. This is a

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truth about this legacy that we cannot allow post-racial adherents to sully.

Jim Jones’s contributions make it all the more important that we think hard and long about the contemporary bid to relegate our race men and women to a bygone era. I remember how my boundless joy at the election of Barack Obama was cut short—cut to the bone one might say—when the post-racial celebrations became for some pundits an opportunity to repudiate the race men and women that made the election of Barack Obama possible. Commentators were all ready to jettison the ones who found a way when there was no way; the ones who were not content to merely “get theirs,” but were committed to opening the door wider so we could come in too. I simply cannot fathom how it can be that our society can drink the post-racial elixir and think that Jim Jones and others like him who paved the way can simply sashay away, their contributions no longer needed.

I think that Jones’s kids have to do more than to keep his invention—the Hastie Fellowship—alive. We have to reinvent ways to stake out the claims of racial justice in the face of concerted efforts to wipe out this sensibility. To borrow a page from Jones’s playbook, we need to know our adversary in order to develop a strategy to struggle against it. Yesterday’s adversary was the complacency that settled in after the collapse of formal segregation. Jones’s advocacy and institutional architecture were manifestations of his determination to push the envelope beyond standard practices. Today’s adversary is a certain post-racial settlement that celebrates but does not expand the modest level of inclusion that has resulted from hard-fought battles like those waged by race men and women of the earlier generation. This settlement is evident in various ways, including in doctrine and discourse that effectively declare that the momentum forward is no longer expected, promoted, or necessary.

**POST-RACIAL AS MISSION ACCOMPLISHED**

Post-racialism sometimes functions as a claim that we have accomplished the mission of racial integration; however, upon closer inspection, this accomplishment is a far cry from what might be called the complete elimination of vestiges of the racial state of affairs ante. A vision of what was once a measure of such an accomplished mission might be found in the affirmative project of *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County.*\(^\text{16}\) The Court’s insistence that New Kent County must eliminate all vestiges of a dual schools system, “root and

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branch,\textsuperscript{17} is a valid benchmark to determine whether we are truly “post-racial” that could be applied throughout society. Now, clearly, most folks who embrace the current conception of post-racialism are hard pressed to point to the complete elimination of vestiges of discrimination root and branch. Thus theirs is a more stylized claim that we are post-racial notwithstanding the fact that any Mission Accomplished claim is clearly premature.

The legacy of race men and women is, of course, to resist anything short of full equality—whether they define it as fully realized integration, an equitable sharing of resources, or some other measure. As Fannie Lou Hamer quipped in rejecting the compromise at the 1964 Atlantic City convention, “[w]e didn’t come all this way for no two seats . . . .”\textsuperscript{18} Today’s claim that we have somehow arrived at the “promised land” reflects less of an embrace of “root and branch” elimination of racial barriers contemplated by New Kent County, but far more of a \textit{Freeman v. Pitts}\textsuperscript{19} attitude toward legal education; namely, that we have integrated to the fullest extent practicable.\textsuperscript{20} As Jones reminds us again and again, we have not come close to what could have happened if each law school that complained about the pool problem had decided to do something about it. Had, say, the top forty schools undertaken an apprenticeship approach like the Hastie, we would be celebrating not dozens, but thousands of minority law professors having joined the ranks through this modest but practical effort. And we have not even thought about the other professions like medicine, business, and the sciences, all of which could have done something similar.

Here I think it is important to point out how the Hastie Fellowship was shaped by Professor Jones’s experience in the federal bureaucracy. As a labor lawyer, Professor Jones worked in the face of intransigence to facilitate integration. Jones’ success in crafting an industry-specific response to the legacy of racial exclusion gives us reason to contest post-racial claims that what has been done to address racial exclusion is pretty much all that could be done. Jones and other race men and women knew better. And as the Hastie experience illustrates, the possibilities are only limited when there exists only a negligible number of individuals empowered enough to implement similar initiatives throughout American society.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Id.} at 437–38.

\textsuperscript{18} \textsc{Kay Mills}, \textit{This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer} 5 (2007).

\textsuperscript{19} 503 U.S. 467 (1992).

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{See id.}
Another version of post-racialism that seeks to render the legacy of our race men and women obsolete is the post-racial pragmatism line. 21 By those lights, race men and women have been eclipsed by the new pragmatism, by the success of Barack Obama and others like him who, it is believed, have managed to break glass ceilings simply by proving themselves fit for the job. Curiously, this notion of the new pragmatism seems to suggest that the race men and women of the past were something other than pragmatists—idealists, perhaps; symbols; or Atlases carrying the race on their shoulders; but not pragmatists. Of course this notion of post-racial pragmatism is contestable on at least two grounds. First, if Barack Obama had run the post-racial campaign that many seem to think he did, he would have lost. Obama’s campaign was smart, it was smooth, and it did what it needed to do, sometimes quietly, sometimes more publicly, but it was not, at the end of the day, nonracial. For any of us living in Ohio, in Michigan, or in other battleground states, we know for certain just how the ground campaign required a practical deployment of white people to talk to white people, to work the institutional mechanisms at hand to smoke out the excuses, and to present the candidate on a clean slate. Nothing about this is new to race men and women, particularly when it comes to building alliances with working class and union folks.

So, who is the “us” that stands to inherit the legacy of the race men and women like Jim Jones? I want to say we are those who know we have benefitted from the efforts of Jim Jones and others who could have climbed the ladder to the ivory tower and pushed it away, but did not. I want to say that we are those who, whether we do race work or not, understand that our very presence in these institutions is important work, and every day we have the opportunity to carve new possibilities and to resist efforts to sully or marginalize the dynamic and creative interventions of the people who got us here. I want to say that the legacy is held not just by people of color but by whites as well who have similarly benefited from efforts to break down the patterns of job placement that privileged the elite. Whites have benefited as well by learning from and working with people with whom they might never have encountered but for the active intervention of the race men and women we honor like Jim Jones.

The reversals of course are real, and they are not all coming from the Tea Party. As we learned from the demise of the first Reconstruction, 22 backlash is not solely a matter of newly empowered

21. See generally Crenshaw, supra note 1, Part IV.C.
redeemers, but is also facilitated by the abdications of those who were at one point our allies, those who stepped back to pursue other interests, or who bought into the argument that enough had been done. I think there are many ideological equivalents of that today, but key among them is the effort to sanction all discussion of race under the template of post-racialism.

I think we are fortunate, however, to be in a far better position than we were during the demise of the first Reconstruction, and it is partly thanks to men and women like Jim Jones that we have managed to hold our own in these institutions and hopefully, to reproduce ourselves. It would be fitting to honor Jim Jones in the fiftieth year of the program if every Jones’ kid committed to doubling his legacy. By that, I mean expanding the clan by creating programs like this and by sending our students to the Hastie Program. I am proud to say that my colleagues and I mentored a few of Jones’ grandkids ourselves; at UCLA, we have sent at least one student directly into the Hastie Program, and now, having created a critical race fellowship at UCLA, we have graduated two Fellows who have entered law teaching. Clearly the most fitting appreciation and tribute to Professor Jim Jones is to continue his work, to hold up his high standards, and hopefully, to make him proud.