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Inspiring Men
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MARK godsey

“WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, WE’VE DONE A PUBLIC SERVICE. WE HAVE SHOWN CONCLUSIVELY, INNOCENCE OR GUILT, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.”

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI LAW PROFESSOR MARK Godsey has a long and distinguished career in the legal profession. His first three years out of law school included clerking for a United States Circuit Court judge in Utah and working for one of the world’s largest corporate law firms in Chicago and New York City while performing pro bono work for indigent criminal defendants in federal court.

Mark then worked for five years as a federal prosecutor in the United States Attorney’s Office in New York City where he tried felony cases including, among other things, organized crime, white-collar fraud, narcotics and corrupt political officials. With regard to organized crime, Mark was involved in the investigation and prosecution of John Gotti, Jr. and the Gambino Crime Family.

A native of Fairfield, Ohio, Mark knew he wanted to return to the Greater Cincinnati area and that he wanted to teach. While an assistant professor at Northern Kentucky University’s Chase College of Law, Mark was asked to work on the Kentucky Innocence Project. As a former prosecutor, Mark was somewhat reluctant, but he accepted. What he soon learned was that this is something about which he is passionate.

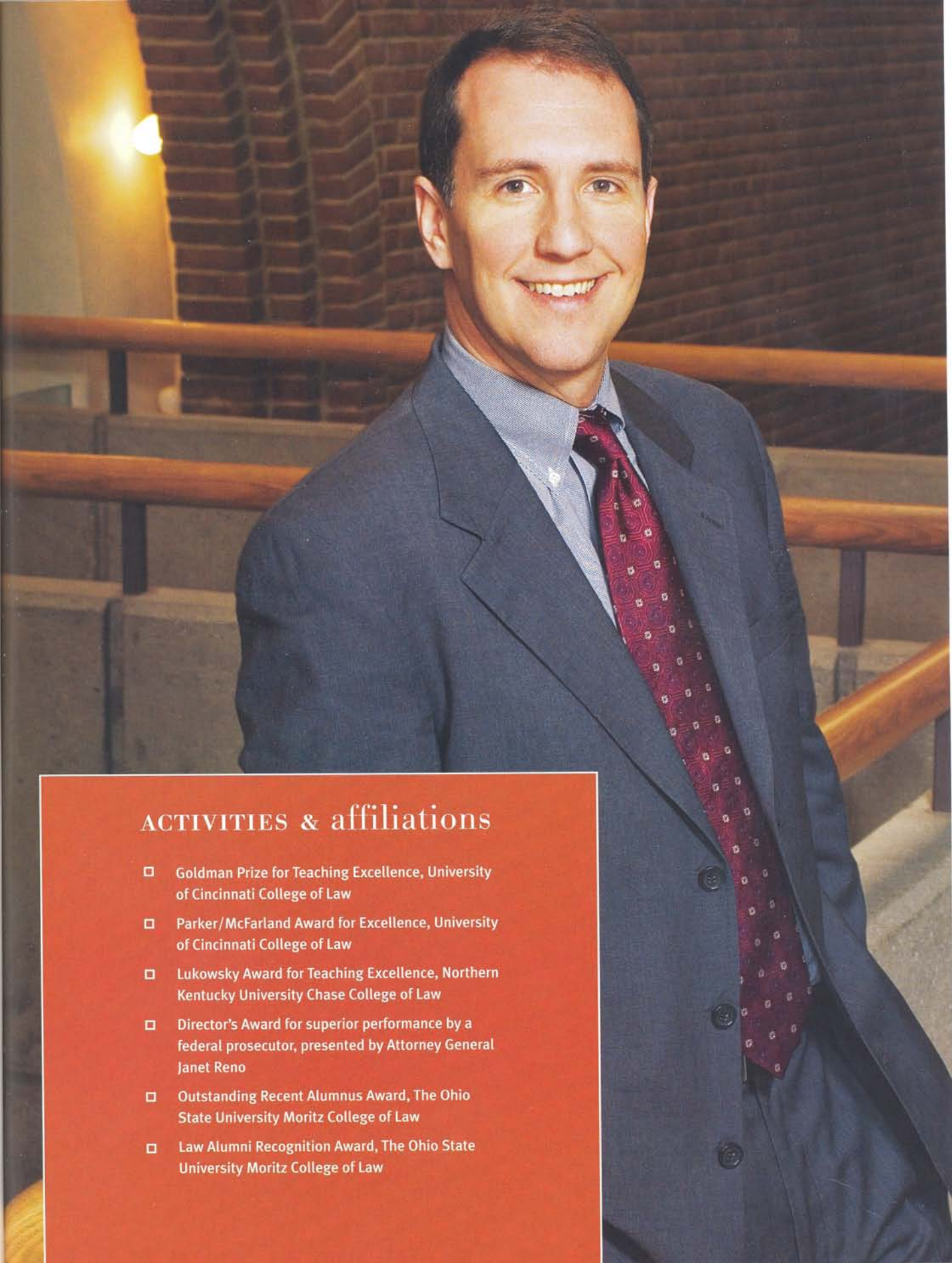
Ohio had no Innocence Project until 2003 when Mark and Cincinnati City Council member John Cranley co-founded the Project. Today, as a UC law professor, Mark serves as faculty director and lead counsel for the Lois and Richard Rosenthal Institute for Justice and the Ohio Innocence Project. As such, he represents convicted Ohio inmates for whom new evidence, such as DNA, proves their innocence. The Ohio Innocence Project provides inmates, who are so often ignored, a voice, a chance to be heard. Mark says he’s found that, “It’s not actually that different from prosecuting a case. Like a prosecutor, who only goes forward once there’s enough evidence to believe an individual is guilty, we start from scratch and slowly investigate, building a case.” Unlike a prosecutor, however, Mark says, “We have the luxury of moving forward only when the evidence is conclusive.”

The information the Innocence Project receives to suggest

a convict may be innocent generally comes word-of-mouth. Inmates or family members often write to the Project seeking help. But according to Mark, “It’s the students who do the work to determine whether there is cause to request DNA. They roll up their sleeves, interview witnesses and visit the prisons.” What the Ohio Innocence Project does is simply pursue the legal course of action to obtain DNA evidence, which perhaps was unavailable or insufficient at the time the case was originally tried.

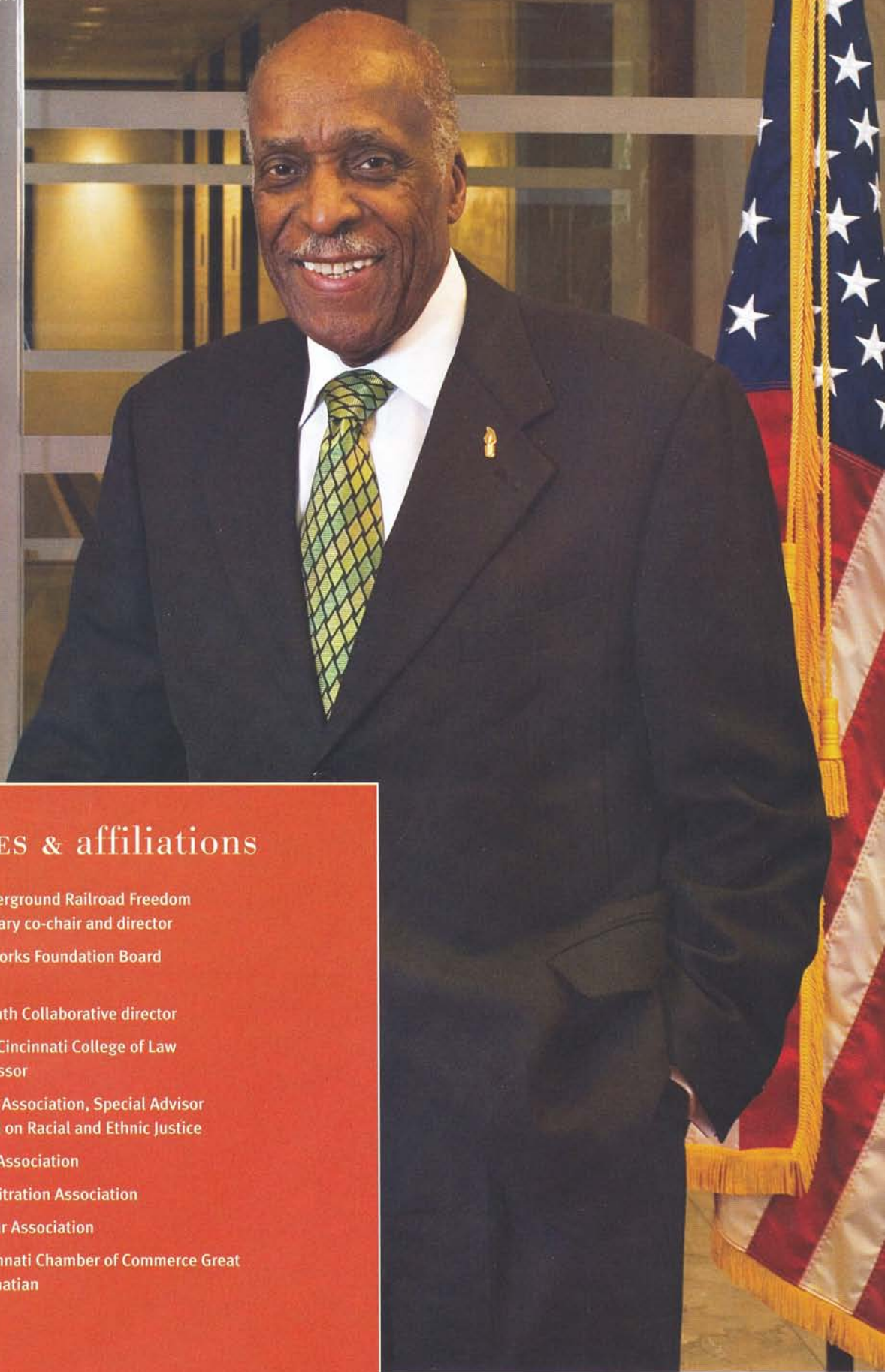
“We often get back DNA evidence proving that the convict is actually guilty,” says Mark. “In these cases, we simply don’t go forward. Whatever the outcome, we’ve done a public service. We have shown conclusively, innocence or guilt, one way or the other.”

Two of the Project’s more high profile cases include the exoneration by DNA of Clarence Elkins, who was released from a life sentence for murder and double rape; and, Chris Bennett, who was released from imprisonment for aggravated vehicular homicide. Universal Studios is currently making a movie based on the Elkins case. For Mark, the most rewarding part of the Project is “releasing an innocent man.” But the other thing he enjoys is “seeing the students and the inspiration they receive after seeing what a difference they can make. That’s what keeps me rejuvenated.”



ACTIVITIES & affiliations

- ❑ Goldman Prize for Teaching Excellence, University of Cincinnati College of Law
- ❑ Parker/McFarland Award for Excellence, University of Cincinnati College of Law
- ❑ Lukowsky Award for Teaching Excellence, Northern Kentucky University Chase College of Law
- ❑ Director's Award for superior performance by a federal prosecutor, presented by Attorney General Janet Reno
- ❑ Outstanding Recent Alumnus Award, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law
- ❑ Law Alumni Recognition Award, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law



ACTIVITIES & affiliations

- ❑ National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, honorary co-chair and director
- ❑ Knowledge Works Foundation Board of Trustees
- ❑ Cincinnati Youth Collaborative director
- ❑ University of Cincinnati College of Law adjunct professor
- ❑ American Bar Association, Special Advisor to the Council on Racial and Ethnic Justice
- ❑ National Bar Association
- ❑ American Arbitration Association
- ❑ Ohio State Bar Association
- ❑ Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce Great Living Cincinnati

HON. NATHANIEL jones

“WHEN I SAW THIS EVIL, I ALWAYS TRIED TO DEAL NOT JUST WITH ITS MANIFESTATIONS BUT TO GO TO THE CORE.”

THURGOOD MARSHALL, UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS Johnson and Carter, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, Nelson Mandela—the list of those with whom the Honorable Nathaniel R. Jones has worked and the social change he has helped to affect are astounding. Having devoted his life to justice and equality, Judge Jones says, “The resolve that I developed had a genesis that goes back even before I was a teenager.”

Having grown up in 1930s Youngstown, Ohio, Judge Jones says, “Certainly, I knew about segregation. Youngstown schools were integrated, but you still knew your place.” My mother used to take me with her to the segregated YMCA, which held forums of nationally known figures who spoke on civil rights matters. I would go and sit in the front row.” Judge Jones’s mother also introduced him to lawyer J. Maynard Dickerson, publisher of the activist *Buckeye Review*. “It was Mr. Dickerson,” says Judge Jones, “who took me under his wing.”

After his return from WWII and his experience in a totally segregated United States Army Air Corp, Judge Jones began his undergraduate studies at Youngstown State University. During these years, Judge Jones says, Dickerson “served as a role model and a teacher, giving me self-confidence and self-expression. Mr. Dickerson made clear to me the areas where I was deficient and offered help to me.” It was also Dickerson who introduced Judge Jones to NAACP activists Theodore M. Berry, Miley Williamson, James H. McGhee and A. Leon Higginbotham, and the NAACP’s chief lawyer Thurgood Marshall, who would later become a Supreme Court Justice.

After practicing law privately for only four years, Judge Jones became executive director of the Fair Employment Practices Commission. In 1960, he was appointed by Attorney General Robert Kennedy as United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio in Cleveland. In 1967, Judge Jones was appointed to the position of general counsel to President Johnson’s National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission), which studied the causes of the urban riots of the 60s, including Watts, Detroit, Atlanta and Cincinnati.

In 1969, Judge Jones was asked by NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins to assume the position of general counsel for the NAACP, which Justice Marshall once held. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter nominated Judge Jones to the United States Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit.

Judge Jones played a significant role in abolishing apartheid in South Africa. He served as an observer of both trials and elections and consulted personally with Nelson Mandela on the drafting of the South African Constitution. While observing a trial in South Africa, Judge Jones also experienced arrest in South Africa for violation of apartheid laws. He was traveling with Molly Blackburn, a leading white apartheid activist, and several others to attend the funeral of slain civil rights attorney Victoria Mxenge. En route, they stopped to visit a family without realizing the township had just that morning been declared off-limits. Without appropriate government documentation specifically granting them access to the township, the entire group was arrested and detained. When asked whether he found this whole ordeal terribly frightening, Judge Jones smiles and says, “At the moment, no.” One year after this experience, Judge Jones again returned to South Africa to lecture at a symposium held for South African judges.

Judge Jones retired as Senior Judge of the United States Circuit Court in 2002. On February 20, 2003, the U.S. Congress passed H.J.RES.2, officially naming the Nathaniel R. Jones Federal Building and United States Courthouse in Youngstown. Today, Judge Jones is Of Counsel and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer of Blank Rome LLP; an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Law; an instructor in the trial advocacy program at Harvard Law School; has taught at numerous law schools; and, holds 16 honorary degrees.