
JOSEPH P. TOMAIN: CHAMPION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

*Bert B. Lockwood, Jr.**

The art of building institutions is underappreciated. The average life of law school deanships is under four years. Joe Tomain devoted fifteen years to building the University of Cincinnati College of Law, and few truly appreciate the challenges he overcame and the principled leadership he demonstrated time and again. His integrity is unimpeachable, and his dedication to the College unwavering. With the steady decline in state support, a premium was placed upon building support amongst the alumni, and Joe excelled in conveying to them the vision of the College and the importance of our mission. His success was due in no small part to the fact that he loved being dean and truly enjoys his friendships with so many of our alumni.

Among the countless memories I cherish, foremost is our participation as international monitors for the International Commission of Jurists to the 1994 South African Election, the first in which black South Africans had the franchise. Stationed in Pretoria, we were attached to an electoral commission that investigated complaints regarding electoral practices in the days leading up to the election. On the two days of actual voting, we were stationed in a black hospital on the first day, which was devoted to voting in hospitals and prisons. We saw patients waiting in line with IV bottles and patients, who had been injured by a bomb a few days before, wheeled in at their insistence so they could cast the first votes of their lives. These scenes were both inspiring and humbling to us, coming from a country where so many of our citizens do not bother to vote. The wonder was repeated the next day when we went to polling stations in Mamelodi, referred to at that time as a second Soweto. People waited patiently in line in the hot sun—a line that stretched for miles at times.

Joe Tomain's concerns for racial justice extend to our own community where he has played a cardinal role in the establishment of the roundtable dedicated to advancing the opportunities for young blacks to have careers in law. As Chair of the Board of Directors of KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Joe is involved in efforts to transform education at the K-12 level. In both these instances, the community has looked to his leadership. I mention two but there are many others, as he

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has been generous in lending his talent to the betterment of the Cincinnati community.

I have been privileged to be able to count Joe Tomain as a friend and colleague for more than twenty years. He is the best-read person I know, and he prizes his library. He is at home with ideas, and his interests are kaleidoscopic—philosophers to mystery writers. Equal passion is evident in his love for music. I believe he credits his thirst for knowledge to his beloved University of Notre Dame. Married to his high school sweetheart, Kathy, Joe is devoted to his family and takes great pride in his sons, Joe and John. Laughter is plentiful, as he has a finely honed penchant to see humor in situations—often directed toward himself. I have learned many lessons from Joe Tomain, one of which is to never make restaurant reservations in his name. I look forward to many more years of friendship and collaboration.