

A PROCLAMATION IN HONOR OF
THE HONORABLE CORNELIUS BLACKSHEAR
U. S. BANKRUPTCY JUDGE (RET)
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

The National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges is delighted to bestow on the Honorable Cornelius Blackshear, a dear friend and esteemed colleague, the distinction of naming their minority fellowship program, the Honorable Cornelius Blackshear Fellowship Program. This program will provide an annual stipend/scholarship for up to three minority attorneys to attend its annual meeting each year.

NCBJ Blackshear Fellows will receive a copy of this proclamation, along with their stipend/scholarship, to remind them of the illustriousness Judge Blackshear brought to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court bench as he distinguished himself by his renowned scholarship and development of bankruptcy jurisprudence.

Judge Blackshear was born in 1939 in Sanford, Florida, where he attended public high school. Following graduation, he moved to New York City where he held various jobs until enlisting in the U.S. Navy in 1959. Upon receiving his honorable discharge from the Navy, he became a member of the New York City Police Department.

Judge Blackshear had a remarkable career within the NYPD during which he attended John Jay College of Criminal Justice (Cum Laude, 1971) and Fordham Law School (1977). In spite of the concurrent educational demands on his time, he was constantly promoted and given more responsible and sophisticated positions in the NYPD.

His dedication to the promotion of minority professional education was reflected in his active participation in the Black American Law Students

Association in law school. He served as the President of the Association and aggressively pursued the development and participation of programs designed to increase enrollment and retention of minority law students at Fordham.

In 1979, two years after graduation from law school, and after sixteen years of remarkable service in the NYPD, Judge Blackshear was appointed as an Assistant U.S. Trustee for the Southern District of New York. Four years later in 1983, he became the first African American to be appointed as a U.S. Trustee. To quote Attorney General William French Smith at that time:

“Mr. Blackshear is an example for us all. In 1951, he came to New York from his home in Florida as an unskilled laborer. He put himself through college and law school while a patrolman

and, later, a detective sergeant on the New York City Police Department, where he served with distinction. During Neil's tenure as the United States Trustee for the Southern District of New York, he was responsible for the supervision of some of the largest cases before the bankruptcy court. He has received substantial recognition for his achievement of rebuilding an understated office, which was suffering from low-morale while, simultaneously, supervising the exceptionally complex Johns-Manville chapter 11 reorganization proceedings."

The capstone of Judge Blackshear's career came with his appointment as a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Southern District of New York on November 25, 1985.

During his stellar professional career, Judge Blackshear received numerous awards and recognitions. Among them are: the “Special Achievement Award,” by the Department of Justice (1980); the “1981 Ruth Whitehead Whaley Award,” by the Black American Law Students Association of Fordham University; the “Executive Office of the United States Trustee’s Award” (1985); the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives New York Chapter’s “Lloyd George Sealy Award” (1986); the “John Jay College of Criminal Justice 1987 “Alumnus of the Year Award”; the “Dean’s Medal of Recognition,” from Fordham Law School in 1988; the John Jay College of Criminal Justice “Fourth Annual Lloyd G. Sealy lecture African American in the Judicial System Award” (1990). In October, 1990, he received an award from the Macon B. Allen Black Bar Association; he received the “Ellis Island Medal of Honor” in

May, 2002; and, in June 2003, he received the New York Institute of Credit's "Leadership in Education Award."

A renowned scholar, Judge Blackshear lectured on criminal justice at colleges and law schools and shared his valuable time as a speaker at numerous bankruptcy seminars. He served as an adjunct professor at City University of New York Law School as well as New York City Technical College. He also instructed the Bankruptcy Clerk's Office on bankruptcy. Additionally, Judge Blackshear participated in numerous panel discussions dealing with various aspects of bankruptcy law. He developed the draft manual for Chapter 7 Administration for the United States Trustee Program. His other activities included being a member of Fordham Law School's Advisory Committee on Minority Affairs, a member of Board of Directors for Fordham Law Alumni Association, chairman of the Scholarship Committee

for the Macon B. Allen Black Bar Association, writer for the Board of Contributors of The Bankruptcy Strategist, contributing author to “Bankruptcy Practice and Strategy,” and he was appointed by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist to the Committee on Court Security for The Federal Judicial Conference of the United States. In 2001, he was appointed a member of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts’ Bankruptcy Judges Advisory Group and in 2002, to their Bankruptcy Court Advisory Council.

Lastly, but most importantly, Judge Blackshear realized the importance of balancing his professional life with his personal one. His constant support of, and his love for his wife, the former Betty Dennis, and his five sons, Adam, Michael, Gregory, Kevin and Edjuan is equally remarkable and truly inspirational.

The NCBJ anticipates that the attorneys who are selected to be NCBJ Blackshear Fellows will be inspired by the example of Judge Blackshear, who dedicated himself to betterment of the legal and judicial system throughout his career.

The National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges is honored to name its minority fellowship program “The Honorable Cornelius Blackshear Fellowship Program,” and henceforth all recipients of this distinction shall be known as NCBJ Blackshear Fellows.

This 16th day of March 2009.

Hon. Gregg W. Zive
President
National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges