PRESENTATION OF THE PAPERS

Howard Jenkins, Jr.

On November 10, 1995, the College of Law was pleased to host the Presentation of the Papers of Howard Jenkins, Jr. AB '36, LLB '41, Hon. LLD '73. More than 100 distinguished guests joined Mr. Jenkins and his wife Elaine Brown Jenkins, AB '37, who travelled from their home in Maryland for this very special event.

The College of Law is honored by the gift of the Howard Jenkins papers, and proud to honor one of its most illustrious Denver natives. His papers document a brilliant career in government, culminating in being appointed by President Kennedy to the National Labor Relations Board in 1963. He was reappointed by Johnson, Nixon and Carter, and served 20 years under six presidents.

Elaine Brown Jenkins, herself a 1937 graduate of DU, has served in the Washington, DC community extensively. She is the founder of One America Inc., a management consulting firm. She has had two presidential appointments, first to the Commission in the Organization of District Committee by Nixon in 1970, and then in 1982, President Reagan named her to the National Voluntary Service Advisory Council.

Other guests at the event included: Lawrence Jenkins, Howard and Elaine's son, a tax auditor for the District of Columbia's government; Donald McDonald, Chair, American Bar Association Labor Law section; Iliff McMahen, Press Officer at the NLRB under Mr. Jenkins, with his wife Libby; Oswald Abernethy, the first African-American administrative law judge in Colorado, Rachel Noel, the first African-American to serve on the Denver school board and to serve as a University of Colorado regent; and John Carey, the son of Sam Carey who was the first African American to practice law in the state of Colorado and after whom the African-American Bar Association is named.

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During the tribute, Dean Dennis Lynch, Professor Roberto Corrada, Jr., Robert H. McWilliams, Jr. ’41, and Colorado Supreme Court Justice Gregory K. Scott spoke of Howard Jenkins and his long legacy in the area of labor law.

Professor Corrada will be studying the Jenkins papers as part of a research project funded by the Hughes Foundation. A permanent display of Jenkins memorabilia was installed in the Westminster Law Library following the presentation.

While on the Board, Jenkins earned a reputation for taking pro-labor stances on a great variety of labor issues. Really, though, Jenkins was an advocate of NLRA enforcement. Jenkins (and member John Fanning) took a dim view of policies deferring to private resolution of labor disputes, and generally was in favor of strong government involvement in policing employer behavior during organizing campaigns and during collective bargaining. Jenkins also felt strongly that the National Labor Relations Act could be used as an important and independent mechanism to combat racial discrimination. His tenure on the NLRB was capped by his strong influence on the Board during the presidency of Jimmy Carter.

Although his contribution to labor policy is well documented, many do not know about Jenkins’ involvement in the Civil Rights movement in this country. In many ways, Jenkins symbolizes that movement. When he was at Howard Law School, he was extremely involved in the strategizing and lawyering that would culminate in the Supreme Court’s landmark decision in Brown v. Board of Education. The Washington Post reported, on the eve of his retirement from the NLRB:

Jenkins sees a certain irony in his departure. “I was sworn in as a member of the Board the day after the civil rights march on Washington in August, 1963... And I’m leaving office the day before the twentieth anniversary of that march.” During that time Blacks have made “some progress” in the labor movement and the workplace, Jenkins said. “But I think the deeply rooted racism and sexism that pervades our total society is still here... Many of the issues that prompted the 1963 march are the same issues being talked about today.”

This biography was written by Professor Roberto Corrada who will be studying the Jenkins papers over the next several years.