

Alabama State Bar

Office of the President

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February 8, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Attorney Fred D. Gray
Presidential Medal of Freedom

Dear President Biden:

Attorney Fred D. Gray served as the first African-American President of the Alabama State Bar from 2002-2003. He recently turned 90 years old and has spent the majority of his life fighting for the civil rights of all Americans. I am writing to request that you award Mr. Gray the Presidential Medal of Freedom. There are very few people, if any, more deserving of this honor.

Reasons for Mr. Gray to receive this honor are generous. He successfully argued some of the most important cases in U.S. constitutional law advocating for the rights of African Americans and against segregation and discrimination on the basis of race; namely, Browder v. Gayle, 142 F. Supp 707 (M.D. Ala. 1956) (holding that segregation of Montgomery, Alabama's buses violated the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment), aff'd, 352 U.S. 903 (1956); Gomillion v. Lightfoot, 364 U.S. 339 (1960) (finding that complaint alleging that local act altering the shape of the City of Tuskegee to remove all but four or five of its 400 black voters without removing any white voters constituted discrimination in violation of the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment was sufficient to state a cause of action); Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education, 294 F.2d 150 (5th Cir. 1961) (holding that due process required notice and an opportunity for a hearing before black students at a tax-supported college could be expelled); Lee v. Macon County Board of Education, 267 F. Supp. 458 (M.D. Ala. 1967) (requiring desegregation plan be put into effect to correct a wide range of activities that were designed to maintain segregated public education in Alabama), aff'd, Wallace v. U.S., 389 U.S. 215 (1967); and Pollard v. United States, 384 F. Supp. 304 (M.D. Ala 1974) (finding genuine issue of material fact existed as to when each plaintiff became

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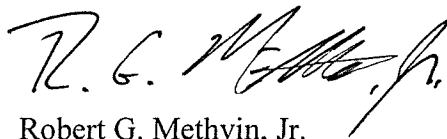
aware of certain claims for wrongful death resulting from the Tuskegee syphilis study). He took on many of these challenges at a young age. For example, he won the landmark ruling in Gomillion after arguing before the Supreme Court at the age of 29. See Elaina Plott, *For a Civil Rights Hero, 90, a New Battle Unfolds on His Childhood Street*, THE N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 25, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/25/us/politics/fred-gray-rosa-parks-montgomery.html>. Approximately four years before that ruling, he challenged Montgomery's segregation laws in Browder.

Mr. Gray was the personal attorney for Ms. Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ms. Claudette Colvin. At a young age, he defended Ms. Colvin and Ms. Parks for refusing to give up their seats to white passengers on Montgomery's buses. He was described by Dr. King as "the chief counsel for the protest movement." Plott, *supra*. Mr. Gray worked with NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund attorneys Constance Baker Motley, Thurgood Marshall, Jack Greenberg, and Robert Carter to desegregate Alabama public flagship colleges, including the University of Alabama, Florence State College, and Auburn University.

Mr. Gray became a lawyer because he understood that lawyers help people. For over sixty years, he has done just that and has made this country a better place by following through on his commitment to destroy everything segregated that he could find. Mr. Gray began his fight for social justice at a time in history which put he and his family in grave danger. For example, he was arrested for filing "needless litigation." See Brad Harper, *Fred Gray 'honored' by plan to rename Montgomery's Jeff Davis Avenue for him*, MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER (Dec. 2, 2020, 12:02 PM), <https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2020/12/02/fred-gray-honored-montgomery-jeff-davis-avenue-renamed/3788677001/>. There is no doubt that he also faced the daily dangers associated with being active in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 60s. Yet, he met these challenges head on, with courage and conviction, despite the threat of serious harm to him and his family.

It is my pleasure to request that the Presidential Medal of Freedom be awarded to a true American hero, Fred D. Gray. I very much appreciate your consideration of this most overdue award.

Very truly yours,



Robert G. Methvin, Jr.

RGM,Jr.:str

cc: Kamala Harris
Alabama Representatives and Senators

bcc: Attorney Walter McGowan
Doug Jones
Cissy Jackson

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