

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2024

# MARYLAND CAREY LAW

## JUSTICE FOR ALL

NEW CENTER FOCUSES ON RACE  
AND THE LAW

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

TRIAL BY FIRE  
National Trial Team celebrates 25th anniversary

ALUMNI ENTREPRENEURS  
Meet alumni business owners

# *JUSTICE FOR ALL*

*New center exemplifies Maryland Carey  
Law's leadership on race and the law*



*By Wanda Haskel*

**W**HEN RENÉE HUTCHINS Laurent took the reins at Maryland Carey Law in 2022, she ushered in an era with increased emphasis on interrogating and reimagining the systems that perpetuate society's inequalities.

An important new center—the Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law—exemplifies that commitment.

Launched in fall 2023, the center is a space for education and engagement, advocacy, and research and is a burgeoning resource for students, lawyers, and community members who are working to advance racial justice.

Named in honor of Maryland Carey Law professors Larry Gibson and Taunya Lovell Banks, the first

Black man and Black woman to become tenured full professors at the law school, the center's mission is to “work collaboratively and interdependently to reimagine and transform institutions and systems of racial and intersectional inequality, marginalization, and oppression,” according to founding faculty director Professor Michael Pinard.

As it develops, the center will engage in these efforts with a diverse array of stakeholders in Baltimore, the state of Maryland, and across the nation, including people and communities directly impacted by inequality and injustice, as well as organizations committed to racial and economic uplift.

Pinard's vision includes courses, workshops, and community conversations on race and the law; advocacy (legislative, policy, litigation, amicus



*l-r Professor Larry Gibson, Dean Renée Hutchins Laurent, Professor Taunya Banks, Professor Michael Pinard*



5th Black Law Alumni Reunion

briefs); and research on racial and intersectional marginalization conducted by Maryland Carey Law faculty, affiliated faculty, and center fellows. In time, law school clinics will become affiliated with the center, starting with a new Forensic Defense Clinic led by Professor Maneka Sinha launching this fall.

“The Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law is a vital addition to our law school and to the community,” says Laurent. “The beauty of this center is that it is a convener of relevant voices to ensure that we are working together to develop solutions.”

### Alumni Support

In the works for several years with support for its initiation from former dean Professor Donald Tobin, the Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law officially launched with a special announcement from the dean at Maryland Carey Law’s 2023 Black Law Alumni Reunion in September. Gibson, a historian and influential political operative, has organized the reunion every five years since 2003. (Associate Dean Russell McClain ’95 will assume the role going forward as Gibson nears retirement).

Attending the weekend events were generations of Black attorneys, elected officials, and members of the judiciary who returned to their alma mater to connect with each other and to see Gibson and Banks.

Gibson, the Morton & Sophia Macht Professor of Law, has propelled countless careers through teaching, mentorship, friendship, and political strategizing. For half a century, the legendary professor has been the nexus of a remarkably connected network that opens doors of opportunity for Black graduates and nourishes an ever-growing community seeking equal representation in the legal profession.

Banks, who retired in 2021, is the Jacob A. France Professor Emeritus of Equality Jurisprudence. She was an original member in the late 1980s of the historic Workshop on Critical Race Theory in which she and colleagues from around the country honed the structure of what was then a new area of scholarship and critical inquiry. Her prolific and wide-ranging writing over more than 45 years has exposed and analyzed intersectional inequality in areas from laws and courts to public toilets. A patron of the arts, Banks also taught courses and produced scholarship focused on law and film.



Learn more about the Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law

Inspired by Gibson and Banks and deeply invested in the center's goals, reunion attendees displayed an outpouring of support for the center. Notably, the Hon. William H. "Billy" Murphy '69 committed \$1 million to help build a solid foundation for the center. Other early donors included several sitting and retired judges, board members, and graduates spanning from 1956 to 2023.

"We are deeply grateful to our graduates who have stepped up to make the vision of the Gibson-Banks Center a reality," says Shara Boonshaft '02, associate dean for external relations. "Our alums have a tremendous stake in the center's work and are making that clear through generous financial support."



The Hon. William H. "Billy" Murphy '69

### Lift-Off

In November, the center kicked off its activities by co-sponsoring a conference and book launch celebrating *Race and National Security*, edited by Professor Matiangai Sirleaf and published by Oxford University Press. Leading experts challenging conventional notions of national security assembled at the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park, a national heritage site that celebrates the contributions of African Americans in the development of Baltimore's maritime industry.

In her opening remarks, Sirleaf spoke about the importance of the work developed for *Race and National Security*. "The volume is aimed at subverting White hegemonic power and dominance in national security," she said. "Through this reframing and

refocusing on the 'faces at the bottom of the well', the volume helps create a more accurate understanding of how race manifests in national security, domestically, transnationally, and globally."

Bringing together domestic, transnational, and comparative and international law perspectives on racial justice and national security, the conference featured an all-star lineup of scholars from across the country and included many of the thinkers who contributed chapters to *Race and National Security*.

In February, the Gibson-Banks Center brought Assistant Professor Orisanmi Burton from American University to Maryland Carey Law for an anchor event focused on his book, *The Tip of the Spear: Black Radicalism, Prison Repression and the Long Attica Revolt*. In *Tip of the Spear*, Burton argues that prisons are a domain of hidden warfare within U.S. borders, replete with violence, isolation, sexual terror, propaganda, and White supremacist science and technology that state actors use to eliminate Black resistance within and beyond prison walls.

Pinard and Brandon Miller '25 moderated the conversation.

Miller is the Gibson-Banks Center's first Erik L. Barron Fellow, a position enabling students to directly engage with the center's work. His goal is to pursue a career in civil and human rights and criminal defense in order to "further movements for a more just and equitable society and world."

At the Gibson-Banks Center, the rising 3L is getting a head start. Besides helping organize and participating in events, Miller has worked on legislative advocacy related to police accountability and prison oversight, conducting extensive research and submitting written testimony in favor of legislative bills pertaining to those issues. As part of his advocacy, he testified before members of the Maryland General Assembly in favor of a police accountability bill.

Miller appreciates the opportunity to work at the center because he gets to be on the front lines of the struggle against systemic injustice.

The fellowship, he says, "has helped sharpen my research and advocacy skills and afforded me tremendous insight into the relationship between law and inequality. It has also been great to work alongside and learn from Professor Pinard, who is a great mentor and an inspiring advocate for racial justice."

Building on Pinard's deep connections nurtured over decades as a nationally recognized expert in issues related to race and the criminal legal system, and as director of Maryland Carey Law's Clinical Law Program, the Gibson-Banks Center has also begun the work of reaching out to the community to generate partnerships.

The center is a member organization of the Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative, formed by Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown and Maryland Public Defender Natasha Dartigue to address mass incarceration in Maryland. Pinard also serves on the collaborative. Moreover, as the Barron Fellow, Miller attended the Criminal Justice Reform Partnership convening at the University of Baltimore School of Law.

### Taking the Lead

This summer, the center takes a great leap forward by welcoming its first executive director, distinguished alum Monique Dixon '96 who comes from her position as deputy assistant secretary for policy in the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

"We are delighted and fortunate to have Monique leading the Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law," says Pinard. "Her breadth and depth of

“

*I learned how to use the law to address... discrimination as a student at Maryland Carey Law and look forward to returning to the school to advance racial equity and justice.”*

*-Monique Dixon '96*



experience and unflinching dedication to racial justice position her to propel the center's work.”

Since graduating from Maryland Carey Law, Dixon has built a career addressing systemic inequalities. Before serving in the Biden-Harris administration, she was deputy director of policy and director of state advocacy at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), Inc. where she implemented federal policy and legislative reform priorities with a focus on criminal justice and education. She was also the lead architect of LDF's state and local legislative and policy activities, including the Justice in Public Safety Project. Previously, Dixon was director of the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Program of Open Society Institute-Baltimore and senior staff attorney at the Advancement Project in Washington, D.C.

She is a 2017 recipient of the *Maryland Daily Record* Leadership in Law Award, a 2011 recipient of the Maryland Carey Law Benjamin L. Cardin '67 Public Service Award, and a 2009 recipient of the Racial Justice Award from the Young Women's Christian Association.

Dixon returns to Maryland Carey Law with a sense of urgency fired by the current political and cultural climate in the United States.

"Our law school launched this center at a time when there are efforts afoot nationwide to ignore the long history of racial discrimination in this country," Dixon said before starting the job. "I learned how to use the law to address this and other forms of discrimination as a student at Maryland Carey Law and look forward to returning to the school to advance racial equity and justice."

*Continued on page 16...*

## BUILDING ON FACULTY EXPERTISE

For decades, faculty members at Maryland Carey Law have centered racial justice in their work. A new crop of scholars joining the faculty in the past five years has deepened and broadened that expertise. These newest faculty members include:

- **Associate Professor Rabiat Akande's** research explores law's interplay with global inequality.

- **Professor Chaz Arnett's** work explores the interplay between race, digital technologies, and criminal legal processes.

- **Associate Professor Guha Krishnamurthi** is a leading scholar on caste discrimination, recidivist premium, and judicial majoritarianism.

- **Assistant Professor Christopher Mathis's** work involves critical race theory and access and equity within higher education.

- **Associate Professor Sarah Lorr's** research focuses on how law and "neutral" standards subordinate poor, nonwhite, and disabled parents in the family regulation system.

- **Assistant Professor Aadhithi Padmanabhan** researches deportation and detention, with a focus on how administrative law principles are developed, modified, and applied in the immigration context.

- **Assistant Professor Omavi Shukur** conducts research at the intersection of criminal law, criminal procedure, and critical race theory.

- **Professor Maneka Sinha's** research explores the intersection of forensic science evidence and outcomes in criminal cases.

- **Professor Matiangai Sirleaf's** scholarly agenda seeks to make visible the extant hierarchies in international law and to remedy the inequities reflected in it.

- **Assistant Professor Tiffany Yang** writes about procedural barriers to civil rights protections, the inequities of law, and social change.

