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SCHOOL OF LAW

**Tribute of Appreciation to Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.,
a Son of Howard University School of Law**

By: Professor J. Clay Smith, Jr.
Howard University School of Law
November 12, 1992

President Jenifer, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Wayman Smith, Dean Ramsey, Faculty, students, Friends of the honorees:

I think that if Professor Herbert O. Reid, Sr., were alive today, he would have been asked to deliver these remarks at the Second Annual Law School Appreciation Dinner held here at the Cosmos Club.

You see, Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., and Professor Reid had a very special relationship during Mr. Jordan's student days at the Howard University School of Law. Professor Reid came to respect Mr. Jordan because he saw something in Vernon Jordan that the legal community in the State of Georgia chose not to see. Professor Reid saw a diamond in the rough that in time would shine through the dark of night. Professor Reid, and Dean George Marion Johnson, saw a diamond that the Howard University School of Law refined and sent forth to strut in the marketplace adorned with Howard University School of Law's badge of history, dignity and integrity.

The person that we thank this evening is one who had chosen his legal role models before he applied to the law school. Vernon Jordan came to the law with the fire of black lawyers in Atlanta--

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A.T. Walden and Horace T. Ward. Walden and Ward were then, and no doubt today, remain the most outstanding lawyers that Vernon Jordan has ever known.

However, it was within the classrooms of the Howard University School of Law that Mr. Jordan was imbued with the knowledge of the law. Professors at the Howard University School of Law told him that he had an obligation to uproot the Jim Crow laws that restricted so many like him. During Mr. Jordan's distinguished presidency of the National Urban League, the sons and daughters of Howard University's law school watched him fulfill this duty to stamp out Jim Crow with determined grace and firm resolve.

The appreciation of Mr. Jordan relates back to Mr. Jordan's mother, who from 1948 to 1960, catered dinners at the Lawyer's Club of Atlanta, a club to which no black lawyers could belong. Mr. Jordan helped his mother serve those dinners, and he has acknowledged that while he was impressed with the barons on whom he waited, that he would become a baron of the law and a leader of his people. Mr. Jordan no doubt used some of the money that he earned at the Lawyer's Club of Atlanta to pay his tuition when he entered the law school in 1957, three years after the Supreme Court decided *Brown v. The Board of Education*.

So, Mr. Jordan, your law school appreciates not only your good works and extraordinary achievements, we also appreciate the A. T. Waldens, Horace T. Wards, the Herbert O. Reids, Srs., and your mother for helping to make the man that heads the transition team

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of the President-elect of the United States, Bill Clinton.

Your law school appreciates the fact that you have carried the name and the traditions of Howard University School of Law as a director to the board rooms of J.C. Penny, Corning Glass Works, Xerox Corp., and Revelon Group, Inc., to name only a few of your several directorships. Because of the groundwork Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., and Ronald H. Brown, others will follow in their footsteps, not only into these board rooms, but to the room that is called the Oval Office.

We sincerely appreciate all of the moral and financial support that you have given to the law school over the years. We appreciate your advice and counsel on ways to make our law school a better place. We appreciate the fact that your law firm Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer and Feld, in which you are a partner, has hired our graduates as associates. We appreciate the energy and the sacrifices that you have made for us and for the good of the nation. We appreciate your wit, and good humor and your faith in the greater good that has sustained you.

For these reasons, Dean Henry Ramsey, Jr., the law faculty and students of the law, and through them, Howard University presents you with a token of our appreciation.