

Paul D. White

Paul Dunbar White was born in LaGrange, Kentucky. He graduated from high school in 1935 in North Vernon, Indiana, and earned his B.A. from Kentucky State College in 1940. There he was an honors student, a member of the choir and played on the Negro Collegiate National Championship football team. After graduation, he played professionally for one season on an Indianapolis team, and then worked at the Indiana State Boys School for a year before moving to Cleveland.



He found a position doing social work at Karamu House and the Friendly Inn Social Settlement. He entered the Army in 1943 and served as a sergeant in Europe. After the war, he joined the Cuyahoga County Child Welfare Board, and entered Western Reserve University School of Law. Passing the bar in 1950 led him to join the law office of Councilwoman Jean Murrell Capers. The following year he became an Assistant City Prosecutor.

White was an Assistant Chief Prosecutor when he was elected to Cleveland Municipal Court in 1963. He was the first black judge in Cleveland to be elected without having been appointed to a prior unfilled term. Newly elected Mayor Carl B. Stokes recruited White to be the Law Director in 1967. This was the top cabinet position at City Hall, which made White acting mayor when Stokes was out of town. But the political world was not to his liking. He resigned in six months and told friends that he did not want to ever have a political job again.

He joined the firm of Baker & Hostetler in 1968 and became the first black associate lawyer in a major Cleveland firm. In 1970, he became partner. White was an expert on public and labor law and affirmative action procedures. He continued to work as a senior partner until suffering a stroke in late 1996.

He died in 1997 at the age of 79.

Paul D. White served Cleveland Municipal Court from December 16, 1963 to December 15, 1967.