

University of Richmond

From the Selected Works of Scott T. Allison

2018

**Waging War on Separate But Equal:
Oliver Hill's Heroic Journey From
Small Town to the Highest Court**

Kathryn K Lynch, *University of Richmond*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/scott_allison/60/

6

WAGING WAR ON SEPARATE BUT EQUAL: OLIVER HILL'S HEROIC JOURNEY FROM SMALL TOWN TO THE HIGHEST COURT

KATHRYN K. LYNCH

"Somebody had to do it, so I didn't see why I shouldn't be that somebody."

-Oliver Hill

After more than 50 years as a civil rights lawyer, Oliver White Hill received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton at the age of 92. Two years later he received the National Bar Association's *Hero of the Law* award. When asked how he wanted to be remembered for his groundbreaking work as a lawyer and civil rights activist after a stunningly successful career, Hill simply replied, "All I want them to say is, Oliver Hill was interested in people, in human beings, and in people having opportunities" (Hill, 2004).

A common trope in the hero's journey is the young would-be hero's humble beginnings. Heroic potential is often obscured by the circumstances of

childhood. It is incumbent upon the hero to rise above those circumstances to achieve greatness. The hero's migration from the innocent childhood environment is the first stage of Campbell's monomyth of the hero's journey, which he refers to as *departure* (Campbell, 1949). The heroism of underdog individuals is perhaps enhanced by the fact that no one expects much from them, and that they choose to face challenges that threatened to destroy them so that others may lead better lives in the future. It is often the case that heroes with the most ordinary of beginnings go on to accomplish the most extraordinary feats, adding even greater merit to their accomplishments in the eyes of the public. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the myriad ways that Oliver Hill shed his status of underdog and became one of Richmond's, and indeed the world's, most inspiring champions of civil rights.

Psychologist Joseph Vandello and his colleagues (2017) have investigated the heroic potential of underdogs, shedding light on why civil rights activists everywhere are especially inspired by Oliver Hill's heroism. Hill had a long journey from a simple segregated elementary school in Richmond, Virginia to the United States Supreme Court, where he and the legal team for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked to overturn the infamous separate but equal clause. One cannot easily convey the gravity of what Hill and his team set out to accomplish. America's position on race relations, and indeed the nation's interracial dysfunction, was rooted in *separate but equal*. To illustrate the magnitude of the barriers faced by Hill, the lawyers of the NAACP at that time were still struggling to officially outlaw lynching of African-American citizens. There was intense opposition to Hill's cause from a large faction of the American people, and many took aggressive steps to prevent Hill from succeeding.

This underdog element of Hill's story is part of what makes his heroic triumph so gratifying. Vandello et al. (2017) argue that one explanation for why human societies love and revere underdog heroes lies in the satisfying emotional payoff associated with watching a hero triumph over difficult conditions that they were not expected to overcome. The underdog's heroism is enhanced by the fact that the odds are stacked against her and yet she prevails

in her heroic efforts (Vandello et al., 2017). While it is easy to appreciate the underdog phenomenon when we examine Oliver Hill's story, this psychological reality is only one part of what comprises his extraordinary heroism.

THE EARLY YEARS

Born on May 1, 1907, Oliver Hill was the only son of William Henry White and Olivia Lewis White. His father left town shortly after he was born, leaving his mother to provide for him with the help of his grandmother. These two women along with his great-aunt were Hill's primary childhood role models, until his mother remarried Joseph Hill when he was six years old. Hill eventually changed his birth certificate to match his stepfather's surname (Hill, 2000).

Throughout his childhood, Hill moved frequently around the state of Virginia depending on where his mother and stepfather could find work, usually alternating between Roanoke and Washington DC. Hill completed 8th grade in Roanoke (the highest level of education Black children were allowed in that area) in 1918, and filled his remaining time with odd jobs at the local ice-cream parlor, as a newspaper delivery boy, and assisting the railroad union members on strike until he was big enough for harder physical labor (Ferguson, 2016). He was on the path to remain a simple laborer, the path that many young African-American men found themselves on as they were shut out of union-protected positions, until his foster mother in Roanoke, Lelia Pentecost, urged him to return to his parents in Washington to complete high school.

At this point Hill was still in the budding stages of the departure phase of his hero's journey. Although he had taken steps to expand his education, the transformational effects of the initiation stage had not yet taken hold. Academically, Hill was not thriving. He went into the school year already a semester behind, and lacked the drive to catch up to his classmates. Hill instead chose to focus his energy on athletic pursuits with his friends. It wasn't until Hill matriculated at Howard University that he found his motivation to become a lawyer (Hill, 2000).

Oliver Hill was always an intelligent young man, but lacked passion or drive for a particular cause. The catalyst that fused his impressive intellect with his desire to help others came after the death of his stepfather's brother, Samuel Hill, who left his nephew his collection of law textbooks upon his passing. The small collection inspired Hill to become a lawyer. After completing his graduation requirements a year early, Hill applied to Howard University Law School while he was still an undergraduate. He saw from his experiences as an African-American man that all of the injustices that crippled the aspirations of Black Americans since the Civil War could be traced back to the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision. Hill found himself in awe of how the actions of one small group of elected officials who were appointed to protect the American people had such profound effects on the social mistreatment of African-Americans. His worldview completely shifted, and new and exciting goals for the future began to take shape. Hill committed himself to becoming a lawyer with the goal of one day taking a case to the Supreme Court that would reverse Jim Crow and the separate but equal statute (Hill, 2003). It was a seemingly simple yet monumentally huge task. While attending law school, Hill's first-rate intellect and his passion for the civil rights of African-Americans combined to form a powerhouse lawyer who was destined to change the course of American history.

For Oliver Hill, the source of his heroism was directly tied to his career path. His discovery of his passion for civil rights and his commitment to the study of law could be classified as a calling -- a strong urge or force that pushed him towards the field that he felt he was meant to pursue. In their analysis of career calling and heroism, Dik, Shimizu, and O'Connor (2017) proposed that a combination of internal and external forces drives the hero's selfless behavior. Support for this argument can be derived from Albert Bandura's social cognitive career theory, which claims that three specific "person-variables" -- self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals -- all interact to influence our vocational decisions (Dik et al, 2017). While this theory is supported in the scientific community, there is still a lack of conclusive research on the nature of the calling itself, defined as the inexplicable instinct to choose one career path over another because it just feels right. Dik et al. (2017) describe a calling as "a transcendent summons to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or

meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals and primary sources of motivation.” From Dik et. al.’s perspective, it is likely that Oliver Hill possessed a combination of specific vocational interests that were influenced by certain character traits and moral values that eventually drove him toward a career that would allow him to accomplish his desired goals.

Law School and the Hero’s Transformation

Hill’s time at Howard Law School was deeply transformative and became a crucial chapter of his heroic life story. After discovering his passion for law and social justice, Hill’s noble ambition and powerful intellect caught the eye of Vice Dean Charles Hamilton Houston, who eventually became Hill’s mentor, legal partner, and trusted friend. Houston encouraged his students to utilize their passion and intelligence to mobilize and unify Black communities against segregation. He shared Hill’s belief that in order to bring about true equality, the foundation of separate but equal had to be permanently eradicated from the federal government. Under Houston’s tutelage, Hill thrived as a law student (Hill, 2010). He would have graduated top of his class were it not for one student: future Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall. Before they were legal colleagues and lead attorneys for *Brown v. Board of Education*, Hill and Marshall were classroom rivals and dear friends.

The two men who positively shaped Hill’s time at Howard and encouraged his developmental growth represent the two different types of mentors in Hill’s hero’s journey, a key element of Campbell’s monomyth of heroism (Allison, Goethals, & Kramer, 2017). The role of the mentor is crucial to the initiation phase of the hero’s journey; they guide the hero’s metamorphosis and impart important wisdom. It is through the interactions with the mentor that the hero gains the inner strength or quality he lacked before the transformation. Mentors help internalize the hero’s vision and crystalize his purpose. The companion or confidante is a more informal mentor to the hero, and a key element of his support system. Similar to the role of the teacher, the companion challenges the hero to better himself and achieve greatness, as well as provide emotional support and share the burdens of hardships faced throughout the hero’s journey.

Both Thurgood Marshall and Charles Hamilton Houston filled important mentorship roles that allowed Hill to complete the initiation phase of his heroic journey. The guidance of the two mentors armed Hill with the skills he needed to combat the many obstacles that stood in his way as an African-American civil rights attorney. Without these mentored skills, Hill likely would not have had nearly the same impact on public policy and the restoration of civil rights for the African-American community. The influence of his mentors was a key turning point in Hill's hero's journey, as it set him on the path to transcend his underdog status.

At Howard University, Hill entered what Campbell refers to as the *initiation* phase, referring to the period growth that occurs before heroes can pursue their heroic goals (Campbell, 1949). It is in this phase that the hero experiences an inner transformation and discovers whatever quality, knowledge, or skill he was previously lacking (Allison & Goethals, 2017). Each hero enjoys a unique transformation, and the degree of that transformation varies as a function of different facets of that hero's character. For Hill, the transformation originated from a combination of external and internal forces. Both his desire to use his intelligence to help others and the tense racial climate of the United States in the 1950s influenced his heroic development.

Hill's transformational journey can also be classified as egocentric to sociocentric, a common type of heroic transformative pattern (Allison & Goethals, 2017). The hero begins with relatively self-centered ambitions until the moment of metamorphosis that expands his previously narrow worldview and inspires him to work on behalf of others. Campbell (1949) describes the key function of the egocentric to sociocentric shift within hero mythology as follows: "[to] get a sense of everything—yourself, your society, the universe, and the mystery beyond—as one great unit" (Campbell, 1949). A final pivotal component of Hill's transformation was the acquisition of a certain quality, skill, or belief that favorably impacted his heroic ability. In this case, Hill's missing element was legal training. He had the passion and some natural abilities, but he needed the wisdom and guidance of Dean Houston and the support and encouragement of Thurgood Marshall to further hone his skills and gain insight into the nuances of the Constitution and the American legal system.

Another psychological phenomenon that allows us to understand the development of Oliver Hill's heroism comes from Kramer's (2017) research on existential courage and its connections to the hero's life. Existential courage is defined simply as "the courage to be." It describes one's ability to find, accept, and actively live out one's true identity; it is also the courage to take on the responsibility to do what no one has done before. Existential courage is most commonly found in emerging adults, which scholars define as young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who have not yet formed an individual identity or developed a plan for their future careers (Kramer, 2017). Oliver Hill easily fit into this group during his undergraduate years at Howard University, when he discovered his passion for law and civil rights and crafted his desired career path. But unlike most other individuals, Oliver Hill proved to be a heroic lawyer who permanently altered American history. This fact raises the question: what is it about Oliver Hill's courage that differentiated him from his peers?

To fully understand an individual's courage in relation to identity formation and heroism, we must understand the circumstances that shape courageous behavior. In Oliver Hill's case, he exemplified two types of courage in his quest for identity: moral courage and physical courage. His work as a civil rights activist often threatened his physical well-being as well as his reputation and position as an attorney. From Kramer's (2017) definition, we see that Oliver Hill possessed considerably more existential courage than the average person. The intense opposition to his work as a civil rights lawyer was a constant threat to his fundamental identity, forcing him to display an extraordinary amount of existential courage to continue his life's work as a civil rights lawyer and activist. His uncommonly large capacity for existential courage contributed to his success as a civil rights activist and is a key component in understanding his overall heroism.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

As Hill was finishing law school, he met a young woman named Berensenia Walker, affectionately known as Bernie. The niece of prominent businesswoman Maggie Lena Walker, Bernie was a schoolteacher in Washington D.C. when she first met her future husband. They married in 1934, one year after

Hill's law school graduation, and had one child together, Oliver White Hill, Jr. Bernie would be a crucial support system for her husband as he became more involved in the NAACP legal defense fund and took on what would eventually become one of the five cases that comprised *Brown vs. Board of Education*. During the most intense years of their marriage, they received so many death threats that they installed floodlights on the perimeter of their home, and their young son was not allowed to answer the telephone for most of his childhood. Bernie supported her husband through it all, and proudly stood by his side until her death in 1993.

When Oliver Hill began practicing law in Roanoke in 1934, the South was not prepared for a confident and innovative Black attorney. Americans were struggling, the economy of the Great Depression showed no signs of improvement, and Jim Crow laws were operating in full-force. As a newly licensed attorney in Roanoke during these troubled times, Hill struggled to make a living at his small practice that he shared with fellow lawyer J. Henry Clayer. Hill took on civil rights cases for Blacks in the area who could afford representation for claims of racial discrimination, but he lacked the time and resources to defend as many cases as he would have preferred. Hill also dedicated what little free time he had to help pioneer the establishment of the Virginia State Conference of NAACP branches. As the years wore on, Hill's small practice still had not gained traction. In 1936, he moved back to Washington D.C. to be with his wife, and frequently took jobs waiting tables to support them until he could resume practicing law full time. Eventually, he was able to start his own practice in Virginia in partnership with two of his classmates from Howard, J. Byron Hopkins and J. Thomas Hewin, Jr. Hill also continued his work with the NAACP, serving as legal counsel for the Virginia Teachers Association to protect African-American teachers who were excluded from union benefits of the all-white Virginia Education Association. Much of Hill's work was dedicated towards equalizing resources and facilities for segregated schools and expanding public transportation for Black students statewide (Hill, 2000).

In 1940, he won his first civil rights case with the help of his close friends and colleagues Thurgood Marshall, William H. Hastie, and Leon A. Ransom. The ruling of *Alston v. School Board of Norfolk, VA* secured equal pay for Black teachers in Norfolk county, and solidified Hill's position as the lead attorney

for the Virginia chapter of the NAACP. Hill began to expand the focus of his legal campaign, moving beyond racial discrimination in the public school system to address prejudice in all facets of southern society, including in the workplace, voting, and criminal justice. Despite the notoriety of his legal work in the state of Virginia during the early 1940's, Hill was drafted in World War II in 1943 at the age of 36, halting the progress of his practice. He claimed in his autobiography that state officials had intentionally arranged for him to be drafted to disrupt the work of his practice and the functionality of the NAACP legal defense fund (Hill, 2000), but it was never proven. Despite the setback, Hill's colleagues continued to fervently take on civil rights cases in his absence, until he was finally discharged in June of 1945. He returned to Richmond just before the birth of his son, Oliver White Hill, Jr., and promptly dove back into his legal work as he and his team prepared to amplify their attacks on legalized segregation in the state legislature.

Political Pioneer in Richmond

As Hill slowly built his reputation and experience as a Civil Rights lawyer during the 1940s, he also took on the role of politician in his hometown of Richmond. Keeping with his overall goal to reverse legalized segregation at the state and federal level, Hill understood the importance of working within the previously existing system of government. To fully recognize and protect the civil rights of African-Americans, the legislature itself needed to be altered, instead of always trying to reverse the damage done to Black Americans after the fact. In 1947, Hill ran for City Council and came in tenth in a race for nine seats. Undeterred, Hill ran again in 1949 and became the first African-American to be elected to the Richmond city council since Reconstruction. Juan Williams, contributor to NPR and Fox news and author of several books on the civil rights movement, best described the gravity of Hill's political aspirations in a time far before the recognition of Black rights really took hold. "You have to understand that Oliver Hill was up against the massive resistance machine -- resistance to legal segregation run by a segregationist political structure throughout the state of Virginia. It was a short political career, but it's evidence of a guy who was fighting his whole life against segregation." However, as controversy over his legal work grew, Richmond

voters grew wary of his brazen objection to the structure of Richmond's political system, and he lost his bid for reelection by fewer than fifty votes.

The setbacks that limited Hill's ability to enact change as a member of the Richmond City Council can be characterized as impediments to heroism (Parks, 2017). Parks states that active and purposeful opposition to heroic action often occurs when a hero acts in service of a minority group; the majority group perceives these actions as unfair distributions of special privileges (Parks, 2017). In the early 1940s, Blacks made up only 30% of the population, and even fewer were able to vote in local elections due to discriminatory voting regulations. Hill's opponents, including many white politicians who actively campaigned against him, served as purposeful impediments to Hill's heroic work. They strived to prevent him from using his resources and status as a city council member to enact change on behalf of the African-American community. Parks (2017) also describes the concept of inhumanization as a motivation for those to purposefully thwart heroes. Inhumanization "refers to [the] perception of an out-group as being less human than one's in-group... which can lead to the inference that out-group members in need will not appreciate the help that is delivered, and so there is no reason to be heroic and intervene" (Parks, 2017). People tend to perceive those in need as less human than those not in need. Thus, when a hero such as Oliver Hill operates as a norm shifter or a disrupter of previously accepted social values, his heroic action triggers strong dissent that can hinder the hero's ability to enact heroic change.

The Path to *Brown v. Board of Education*

By the mid-1950s, Hill had focused all of his energy on taking on as many civil rights cases as possible. In the heart of the former confederacy, Oliver Hill and his team were a symbol of unprecedented defiance. His firm filed more civil rights lawsuits against the Commonwealth of Virginia than any other Southern state during the civil rights movement. At one point they had more the 75 open cases at once (Ferguson, 2013). Despite their heavy workload, the practice was far from a lucrative one. "We got very few fees for any of this," Hill told *The Richmond News Leader* in 1992. "We were just interested in civil rights" (Williams, 1997).

One afternoon in 1951 at around 5 pm, Hill was working in his office when he received a phone call from a young high school student by the name of Barbara Johns. She calmly explained to Mr. Hill what had happened at her school that day. Under her leadership, the majority of the student body at the segregated R. R. Moton High School in Farmville, Virginia had walked out of school in the middle of the day in protest of their lack of supplies and resources. They demanded not just better facilities but equal facilities to that of White public schools. Hill congratulated the young woman for her confidence and hard work, and now that their point had been made they should return to school the next day. Johns disagreed with his strategy. She explained to Mr. Hill that they were not finished yet, that they wanted to make a real difference, and wanted his firm to come represent them as they filed their suit against the local school board.

Johns was so persistent that Hill eventually agreed to come down and meet with Prince Edward County members to discuss the possibility of a case (Hill, 2000). Hill spoke of his experiences meeting with the children of R. R. Moton High School in a 2004 interview with Julian Bonds, former chairman of the NAACP: “The kids were all there, and they had such high morale. We still intended to tell them go on back to school, but they were so, I don’t know, they were just so persuasive. We told them if they could get their parents to agree, we would no longer file suits charging inequality, that we were going to challenge segregation per se from then on. And, if their parents would back them, we would file suit for them” (Hill, 2003). That case, *Davis vs. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, became one of five cases integrated into *Brown v. Board of Education*, the decision that ruled that segregation in public education was unconstitutional and violated the Fourteenth Amendment. A simple phone call from a 15-year-old girl had led Oliver Hill directly to his lifelong goal: the chance to argue the unconstitutionality of segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson* before the Supreme Court.

As Hill and his fellow members of the NAACP legal team (including longtime friend and colleague Thurgood Marshall) prepared for trial, their strategy for attacking the statute of separate but equal shifted under the invaluable guidance of Charles Hamilton Houston. Instead of just working to make separate conditions and resources equal for Whites and Blacks as they were meant to

be, they moved to eliminate the concept of racial segregation altogether. By proving the widespread poor conditions of segregated schools in Black communities, they argued that under the framework of segregation it was nearly impossible for the two groups to remain separate and have equal conditions and resources -- a direct violation of the Fourteenth amendment. While the Supreme Court did officially and unanimously declare the unconstitutionality of the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling, it would still be some time before all public schools in Virginia would be completely desegregated. Hill knew while they had accomplished a great feat, there was still a long journey ahead.

In response to the 1954 ruling, Virginia state legislators immediately began work in cooperation with more than one hundred southern congressmen to oppose the integration of the public school system. Virginia senator Harry F. Byrd Sr. spearheaded the passing of a set of laws that were later referred to as the Massive Resistance Policy, or the Stanley plan. These policies included a pupil placement board that had the power to assign students to different public schools and effect a complete shutdown of all state funds directed towards schools with plans to integrate. Two new formal legislative committees were approved by Byrd to prevent local school boards from adopting the Supreme Court's mandate and to ensure that integration would never take hold in the state of Virginia. Byrd and his administration made plans to formally close all schools that did not conform to his massive resistance policy, and even gave out tuition grants to students who spoke out against integration (Virginia Historical Society, 2016).

The school board of Prince Edward County, the very same county that Oliver Hill prosecuted against before the supreme court during Brown v. Board, closed its entire public school system, choosing instead to rely on private donations to build and operate all-white private schools. Almost no funds were allocated for the education of Black students. Many children who could not make the trip out of state to attend a different school missed almost five years of formal schooling (Virginia Historical Society, 2016). These were just some of the obstacles civil rights attorneys like Oliver Hill continued to struggle against even after Brown v. Board, as equal access to education remained a key issue for the NAACP legal team.

Heroism of the NAACP

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) played a role in the heroism of Oliver Hill in the context of a broader nationwide movement for social change. The Civil Rights Movement and the NAACP shared objectives rooted in heroic behavior. The NAACP inspired and supported Hill's legal work and social activism. To appreciate the NAACP's role in Hill's heroism, we turn to Hoyt's (2014) analysis of gender and racial issues in the context of leadership. Hoyt argued that inequality is not simply an ethical wrong but is a disservice to our entire society. Diverse gender and racial groups provide important perspectives that can shed light on new ideas, demonstrate problems within our society that go unexamined, and ultimately engender legislation that protects both minority and majority groups. Increases in empowerment for women have been shown to increase policy-making on behalf of women and children, ethnic and racial minorities, and environmental programs. Women leaders also display more democratic and participatory leadership styles, are less likely to support unethical decisions in the workplace, and generally are "more likely to endorse values that promote the welfare of others" (Hoyt, 2014).

It is not enough to simply conclude that women are effective leaders; they are in some ways more effective than men, especially in the area of protecting and assisting minority groups. From these considerations, it is probable that the same rationale for superior female leadership can also be used to argue for the superiority of racial minorities who have assumed leadership roles, especially in judicial or legislative positions. The bravery, intelligence, and leadership displayed by Oliver Hill and his defense team not only made them successful lawyers when challenging the Supreme Court, but the methods by which they achieved those goals inspired and influenced the next generation of legal activists.

An analysis of deviant heroes by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2017) also provides valuable insight into the heroism of social activists, particularly mobilized groups with a specific cause like the NAACP. Deviant heroes are defined as individuals who challenge universally accepted social norms on behalf of a marginalized group. They tend to be dependent on the positivity and

camaraderie of their group to sustain their heroic action despite fear of failure, loss of hope, and intense opposition from members of the majority group. Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2017) refer to a New York City-based AIDS activist group called ACT UP/NY as a model for the typical group dynamic within a collection of deviant heroes. Many of the ACT UP/NY behaviors match the values and actions of the NAACP throughout the 20th century. Csikszentmihalyi et al. emphasize the empowering and uplifting effects of effective deviance: “Analysis of the lives of Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi found support for the role of interpersonal relationships with peers and role models in their displays of prosocial disobedience behaviors... the capacity to act heroically, rather than being specific to the individual, can be seen as social constructs and learned behaviors that can be developed through social interactions” (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2017).

These findings reveal the power of even one simple act of heroism. Heroic behavior does more than benefit the target group; it also promotes the rise of future heroes who are inspired and motivated by that heroic action. This cyclical nature of inspiring heroism characterizes the impact of Oliver Hill’s work. The founding members of the NAACP inspired future generations of activists like Oliver Hill to continue their heroic agenda, and Oliver Hill’s efforts and dedication on behalf of African-Americans likely helped inspire the next generation of humanitarians prepared to combat racism during the Civil Rights movements and into the 21st century.

Another psychological phenomenon that contributes to our understanding of the heroism of the NAACP and more specifically Oliver Hill is what Janoff-Bulman and Bharadwaj (2017) refer to as moral conviction. These authors define this quality as “very strong attitudes based on the perception of morality and immorality” (Janoff-Bulman & Bharadwaj, 2017). Moral conviction is a key component to the sustainment of career heroism. Social heroes with high levels of moral conviction feel obligated to act heroically on behalf of others in need. Janoff-Bulman and Bharadwaj define two types of moral heroes: rescuers and resisters. The NAACP as a whole falls into the resister category. Members of this group publicly participated in risky behaviors in order to promote a moral cause and advocate for others who could not defend themselves. High moral conviction can sometimes lead to outright rejection of authority

if that authority's actions violate the hero's personal convictions. The authority in turn will often resist the resistance. Byrd's massive resistance policy in reaction to the *Brown v. Board* ruling is a perfect example of one of the many obstacles Hill and his contemporaries faced as they strived to make progress on behalf of African Americans. The NAACP's strong moral convictions required them to deviate from the social norm to promote a more equitable and just society, and were essential to ensuring the success of the NAACP and Oliver Hill despite constant opposition from entrenched authorities.

End of Career

Throughout the rest of the 1950s, Hill remained dedicated to working with the NAACP legal defense fund. After the official collapse of Massive Resistance, Hill left his private legal practice in the hands of his partners to take a position with the Federal Housing Administration. For five years he worked to desegregate public housing in the state of Virginia and nationwide. The passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was an unquestionable victory for the NAACP, but many African-Americans still relied on the assistance of the legal defense fund to hold local government officials accountable if their rights were not protected. According the official website, "the NAACP did provide legal representation and aid to members of other protest groups over a sustained period of time. The NAACP even posted bail for hundreds of Freedom Riders in the '60s who had traveled to Mississippi to register black voters and challenge Jim Crow policies" (NAACP, 2016). After making strong progress on the desegregation of schools and housing and the illegalization of lynching, the NAACP began to expand their primary goals.

While the Civil Rights Act did grant people of color some degree of protection for their civil liberties and educational opportunities, a great deal of racial discrimination was still deeply rooted in outdated housing policies, the workforce, and the criminal justice system. As their movement gained traction and their pool of resources continued to expand, the organization broadened their focus to fight oppression within every facet of American society. At the time of his retirement, it was estimated that Oliver Hill's team was responsible for winning more than \$50 million in higher pay, new buses, and better schools for black teachers and students in addition to his work with the

Federal Housing Administration. Hill's hard work in the face of blatant discrimination permanently altered the lives of millions of African-Americans, and paved the way for their children to have access to the education they deserved.

This work also represents the final stage in Hill's hero's journey: the return. According to Campbell's monomyth, after heroes successfully complete their inner transformation, "the hero is forever changed and returns to her original world. There she bestows some type of gift to that society, a gift that is only made possible by her own personal journey of growth and change" (Allison & Goethals, 2017). Hill's extraordinary contributions on behalf of the African-American community solidify his status as a hero as he used his intellect and influence (the effects of his transformation at law school) to elevate those around him and deliver lasting positive social change.

Recognition and Awards

After the most active years of the Civil Rights movement, the state of Virginia and many other national organizations recognized Hill for his outstanding work in the face of racist and oppressive policies. Some of these awards include: the National Bar Association Lawyer of the Year, the Justice Thurgood Marshall Award, and the William Robert Ming Advocacy Award. In his home state, Hill was recognized by the Richmond Bar Association, who established the Hill-Tucker Public Service Award in his honor in 1989. Beginning in 2002, the Virginia State Bar awarded the Oliver White Hill Law School Pro Bono Award annually to one law student who demonstrates an exceptional commitment to public or community service (LaGrand, 2000).

After his official retirement, Hill received the Harvard Medal of Freedom along with the rest of the NAACP lawyers who played a role in *Brown v. Board*, the American Bar Association Medal and the National Bar Association Hero of the Law award, and, most prestigious of all, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, personally awarded by President Bill Clinton in 1999. In 2005, Hill received the Spingarn Medal, the NAACP's highest honor. That October, Virginia Governor Mark R. Warner dedicated the newly renovated Virginia Finance building in Virginia's Capitol Square in Hill's honor. The Oliver W.

Hill Building became the first state-owned building as well as the first in Virginia's Capitol Square to be named for an African American. For some, these accolades represent the pinnacle of heroic achievement, and are a necessary and inspirational component of their legacy. While the notoriety of these awards may have drawn more attention to Hill as his career came to a close, they were never part of Hill's long-term goals as an attorney. They simply represent the capstone of a lifetime of invaluable service to his community and to the entire nation.

Legacy

Oliver Hill died peacefully in his home on the morning of August 5th, 2007 at the age of 100. He outlived his dear wife Bernie by over a decade. At the time of his death he was one of the few remaining pioneers of the Civil Rights era, and spent most of his final years working on his biography and serving as a visiting scholar at his alma mater Howard University (Fergeson, 2013). Governor Tim Kaine issued a statement on the day of his passing as well as an order to fly flags throughout the state at half-mast. "As a pioneer for civil rights, an accomplished attorney, and a war veteran, Mr. Hill's dedication to serving the Commonwealth and the country never failed. And, despite all of the accolades and honors he received, Mr. Hill always believed his true legacy was working to challenge the conscience of our Commonwealth and our country" ("Civil Rights Lawyer", 2007). It is impossible to include a list of heroes of Richmond without mentioning the contributions of Oliver Hill. As the former capital of the Confederacy, the city of Richmond still struggles to fully understand and account for its dark past where that racial divide is still deeply felt. Hill's work to openly and candidly oppose the systemic oppression that impacted his community along with millions of African-American citizens nationwide will no doubt inspire generations of future Americans.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter, we have seen how every milestone in the life of Oliver Hill has matched up with a phase in the hero's journey, an almost universal path of personal character development and model of heroic action

(Campbell, 1949). A consistent theme in our understanding of Hill's heroism is the fact that he was constantly an underdog. Hill's entire life was dedicated to eradicating societal norms that were designed to keep him from conducting such an eradication. In many ways, he never fully shed his underdog status because in each new chapter of his life involved overcoming the impediment of being a Black man in a racially segregated nation. Not only did he repeatedly overcome this daunting obstacle, he made it his mission to reduce those impediments that prevented other people of color from achieving their full potential. Despite the many disadvantages he faced, despite all of the obstacles in his path, he overcame them not for his own benefit, but in the service of others. Oliver Hill's intelligence, passion, ambition, selflessness, and diligence in the pursuit of justice and equality will ensure his standing as one of the greatest legal minds of the 20th century and a hero to millions.

REFERENCES

- Allison, S. T. (2015). The initiation of heroism science. *Heroism Science*, 1, 1-8.
- Allison, S. T., & Goethals, G. R. (2013). *Heroic leadership: An influence taxonomy of 100 exceptional individuals*. New York: Routledge.
- Allison, S. T., & Goethals, G. R. (2014). "Now he belongs to the ages": The heroic leadership dynamic and deep narratives of greatness. In Goethals, G. R., et al. (Eds.), *Conceptions of leadership: Enduring ideas and emerging insights*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Allison, S. T., & Goethals, G. R. (2017). The hero's transformation. In S. T. Allison, G. R. Goethals, & R. M. Kramer (Eds.), *Handbook of heroism and heroic leadership*. New York: Routledge.
- Allison, S. T., Goethals, G. R., & Kramer, R. M. (Eds.) (2017). *Handbook of heroism and heroic leadership*. New York: Routledge.
- Allison, S. T., & Setterberg, G. C. (2016). Suffering and sacrifice: Individual and collective benefits, and implications for leadership. In S. T. Allison, C. T. Kocher, & G. R. Goethals (Eds.), *Frontiers in spiritual leadership: Discovering the better angels of our nature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Allison, Scott T., George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer (2017). "Setting the Scene: The Rise and Coalescence of Heroism Science." In *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*, 1-13. New York: Routledge.
- Campbell, Joseph (1949). *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Pantheon Press.
- "Civil Rights Lawyer Oliver Hill Dies at 100" (2016). Remembrances. Podcast audio. August 6, 2007. Accessed October 21. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12523041>.

- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, Michael Condren, and Izabela Lebeda (2017). *Deviant Heroes and Social Heroism in Everyday Life*. In *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*, edited by Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer, 249-61. New York: Routledge.
- Dik, Bryan J., Adelyn B. Shimizu, and William O'Connor (2017). "Career Development and a Sense of Calling." In *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*, edited by Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer, 316-34. New York: Routledge.
- Ferguson, Larissa S. (2016). "Oliver W. Hill (1907–2007)." *Encyclopedia Virginia*. (retrieved October 21).
- Goethals, G. R. & Allison, S. T. (2012). Making heroes: The construction of courage, competence and virtue. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 46, 183-235.
- Hill, Oliver W. (2000). *The Big Bang: Brown vs Board of Education and Beyond: The Autobiography of Oliver W. Hill, Sr.* New York: Four-G Publishers.
- Hill, Oliver White (2003). "Interview with Oliver W. Hill." By Julian Bond. *Virginia Quarterly Review* 80, nos. Winter 2004 (December 6).
<http://www.vqronline.org/vqr-portfolio/interview-oliver-w-hill>.
- "Oliver Hill: Going to Howard Law School" (2010). Interview. Video file. youtube.com. Posted by The Visionary Project, March 18. Accessed October 21, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqYduojfmOQ&list=PLCwE4GdJdVRI9CCQy_COkl4Ug9rMND53ind ex=1.
- Janoff-Bulman, Ronnie, and Prerana Bharadwaj (2017). *The Courage of One's Moral Convictions*. In *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*, edited by Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer, 547-60. New York: Routledge.
- Kim, J., Allison, S. T., Eylon, D., Goethals, G., Markus, M., McGuire, H., & Hindle, S. (2008). Rooting for (and then Abandoning) the Underdog. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 38, 2550-2573.
- Kramer, Roderick M. (2017). "To Become or Not to Become? Existential Courage and the Quest for Identity." In *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*, edited by Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer, 262-79. New York: Routledge.
- LaGrand, Wendell (2000). "Oliver Hill Wins ABA Medal: Richmond Lawyer Has Been a Civil Rights Leader for More than 60 Years." *ABA Journal* 86, no. 7, 96.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27841606>.
- "Massive Resistance" (2016). In Virginia Historical Society. Accessed November 29. <http://www.vahistorical.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/massive>.
- "Oliver Hill" (2016). National Visionary Leadership Project. Accessed October 21. <http://www.visionaryproject.org/hilloliver>.

- Parks, Craig D. (2017). "Accidental and Purposeful Impediments to Heroism." In Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership, edited by Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer, 438-52. New York: Routledge.
- Williams, Michael Paul (1997). "Oliver Hill." Richmond Times-Dispatch (Richmond, VA), February 7. http://www.richmond.com/special-section/black-history/article_ddc2f39c-3afb-5e88-a9a7-65fc945310ff.html.