

*Chief Judge of the State of New York*



*Jonathan Lippman*

Black History Month Committee  
Unified Court System  
Barry Clarke, Chair  
100 Centre Street  
New York, New York 10013

February 7, 2013

Dear Friends,

I am prevented from joining you tonight by my Court of Appeals calendar in Albany. But I did not want to miss this opportunity to send my greetings. My warmest appreciation goes out to Barry Clarke, Joseph Parris, and the Unified Court System's Black History Month Committee for putting together this excellent program, and to the Tribune Society and the Judicial Friends Association for your co-sponsorship. You have a terrific speaker tonight in Cheryl Wills, whose distinguished television journalism is only the beginning of her many achievements.

I send my heartfelt congratulations to the Hon. George Bundy Smith on receiving the Tribune Society's lifetime achievement award. His clear and thoughtful jurisprudence, his excellent legal mind, and his deep commitment to doing the right thing made him a brilliant jurist over the course of more than three decades. Beyond his service on the bench, Judge Smith has devoted himself throughout his life to ensuring that our nation delivers on its promise of equal opportunity and equal justice.

This year on Black History Month, we commemorate the anniversary of the immortal words of two great Americans, President Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. So much has changed in the 150 years since President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation and in the 50 years since the March on Washington when Dr. King told us "I Have a Dream." And yet it is essential that we remember these moments to understand how far we have come and appreciate what still remains to be done.

This is the Unified Court System's 23rd annual Black History Month celebration, and what could be a more fitting tradition. The courts and the law have been powerful tools in moving towards equality in this country and have been the focus of some of the most significant events in Black History in America. Both of the milestones we celebrate today

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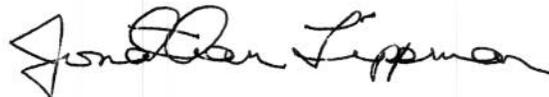
Re: Black History Month Celebration

impelled our nation towards revolutionary changes in the law that in turn altered our nation's course.

When Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation declared "that all persons held as slaves" in the states rebelling against the Union "are, and henceforward shall be free," it laid the groundwork for the XIII Amendment to the United States Constitution and the abolition of slavery by law throughout this country. One hundred years later, a quarter of a million people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial to hear the powerful and righteous words of another American hero, Dr. King, as he called out for true equality for all races. Less than a year after the March on Washington where Dr. King delivered his clarion call for racial justice, Congress passed landmark legislation that outlawed discrimination and swept away institutionalized barriers to equality. Our legal system and our courts were critical to giving effect to the enormous social changes advanced by these two historic messages.

We in the court system continue to play a critical role in protecting the freedoms to which every man and woman in this country is entitled. I am so proud of the work that the members of our court family do every day to ensure equal justice for all. You honor the great moments in our history that we look back on today. Thank you and best wishes for a wonderful evening.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Lipman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".