

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Constance Belton Green

Date 2016 October 26

Description Oral history interview with Constance Belton Green who was interviewed by Stacey Close on October 26, 2016 for the Connecticut Bar Foundation's History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession Project.

Topics Discussed: - Early Life: Constance Belton Green was born in Portsmouth, Virginia in 1947, into a segregated environment. Her parents were educators. -

Education in a Segregated Environment: She went through a segregated school system and attended Hampton Institute. In 1954, the year of Brown v. Board of Education, Virginia took ten years to desegregate. - College: She was an

exchange student at Cornell and studied in Europe. - Role Models and Hampton

University Experience: At Hampton, she was influenced by President Brud

Holland. Her major role model was Constance Baker Motley, the NAACP Civil

Rights Lawyer, known for her work on Brown v. Board of Education and as the

first African American woman appointed as a federal judge. Green initially

majored in Early Childhood Education but decided to pursue law in her senior

year to work in policy. - University of Connecticut Law School: Constance Belton

Green decided to attend the University of Connecticut Law School in 1969 after

being offered a full scholarship. She was one of very few students of color and

the only woman of color in her class. She met her future husband, Alan Green, in

law school. - Balancing Career, Family, and Community: Constance discusses the

balance between career, marriage, family, and social expectations, particularly

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for African American women in the 1960s. She prioritized family and community

first, then career. She became a member of the Connecticut Bar in 1975. - Early

Legal Career: She passed the bar exam in the early 1970s. She practiced family

law in New Haven with the firm Sosnoff, Cooper and Whitney, a public interest

law firm. - Significant Cases: One notable class-action lawsuit she worked on

addressed discrimination against pregnant women, who could be fired and

denied unemployment compensation. She was also a founder of Connecticut

Women's Legal and Education Fund. - George Crawford Black Bar Association:

While in law school, she and other students helped initiate an affinity group for

African American law students. This was a precursor to what became the George

Crawford Black Bar Association, named after a prestigious Black lawyer.

Constance Belton Green was honored with a Trailblazer Award by the

organization in 2012, which supports African American lawyers through

programs and networking. - Transition to Equity and Community Work: After her

law practice, Constance gravitated towards equity and community work,

including education. She worked at Eastern Connecticut State University

focusing on direct equity, mentoring students, and confronting discrimination.

She also served on boards like the Bloomfield Board of Education and chaired a

charter school in Hartford. - Pursuit of a Doctorate: Constance pursued and

earned a doctorate from Teachers' College at Columbia University in 2003. -

Mentoring and the Importance of Education for African American: She primarily

mentors African American women but acknowledges the need to mentor African

American men. - Support Systems and Navigating Discrimination: She highlights

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the critical role of support systems, including family and affinity groups like the

Black Law Students' Association at UCONN.

Dimensions Duration: 8 Minutes, 45 Seconds