

Warren Hope Dawson, Esq, Tampa Attorney

A native of Mulberry, Florida, a graduate of Union Academy High School in Bartow, the third black graduate of a public high school in Polk County, Florida to become a lawyer, and of Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. Mr. Dawson served as an active duty officer in the U.S. Army from 1961 to 1963 and received his law degree from Howard University, Washington DC in 1966.

Not only was his entry into the legal profession a piece of Florida history, he went on to become a nationally recognized leader in the legal profession in the United States. He is a veteran of innumerable civil and criminal trials, both jury and non-jury. He has worked as lead counsel in trials before hearing officers, mediators, arbitrators, trial judges sitting with and without jurors, and before appellate courts. He has been general counsel and labor counsel to clients in appearances before judicial and administrative law judges, as well as before regulatory agencies, both federal and state.

In 1974, Attorney Dawson became the lead counsel for the Plaintiffs in the now famous lawsuit known as Manning vs. the School Board of Hillsborough County. The Plaintiff class consisted of “all minor Negro children and their parents residing in Hillsborough County.” In that role, he vigorously represented the Plaintiff class and was responsible for monitoring and enforcing the desegregation Orders handed down by the Federal Courts.

This civil rights lawyer worked for 24 of the next 27 years (1974-1998) without compensation as he continued the legal effort to eliminate the dual (one white and one black) school systems in the public schools of Hillsborough County, Florida. In 2001, a Federal Appeals Court finally ruled that the School District had achieved “unitary status” and no longer required federal judicial supervision.

Dawson also participated in the voting rights case of Warren vs. City of Tampa. That case successfully challenged the at-large election systems of the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County. That legal effort led to the creation of a combination of at-large and single-member districts in the city and county. Dawson and another civil rights lawyer successfully lobbied the Florida Legislature to adopt single-member districts for the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate.

In 1967, Dawson became the city's first black Assistant City Attorney for the City of Tampa – and may be the first black attorney to hold such position in the South. In 1983, his leadership among lawyers was recognized by his election as President of The National Bar Association. In that same year, Ebony Magazine recognized Dawson as one of the “100 Most Influential Black Americans”. And before the 1990 Super Bowl in Tampa, Dawson pushed for the integration of the Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla. Some of Mr. Dawson's Recognitions & Awards include, but are not exhaustive, of the extent of his actual experience, activities, affiliations, recognitions, or awards:

- Inductee, National Bar Association Hall of Fame, August, 2007.
- Awarded Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, FAMU, 2011.
- The Warren Hope Dawson Elementary School, a \$20 Million Dollar state-of-the-art public school for children in grades Pre-K through 5th, was established by the Hillsborough County School Board in the Riverview community. The School received its first students in August of 2017.