DONALD GIST

Donald Gist is the senior partner of Gist Law Firm in Columbia, S.C. He is a 1978 graduate of the University of South Carolina School of Law and holds a master's degree in history from the University of South Carolina and a bachelor's degree from Benedict College.

While practicing employment law primarily, Gist also focuses on personal injury, medical malpractice and criminal law.

Before forming his law firm, he worked for the South Carolina Department of Labor as director of labor conciliation and director of labor management services with responsibilities as deputy commissioner for labor management employment issues for 18 years. A winner of many awards throughout his career, in 1985 he was named a labor expert in the field of labor-management litigation and employer-employee dispute resolution arenas in the United States by the Harvard University Business Review Department. As a result, the South Carolina General Assembly recognized his achievements on March 12, 1985.

He is a member of professional groups such as the Richland County Lawyers Association and the South Carolina Black Lawyers Association and is a member of the Columbia Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. and a deacon at St. John Baptist Church. He is married to Adrienne R. Gist. They have two children and three grandchildren.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY
CELEBRATION HISTORY

Even before the inception of the national holiday, commemorative activities were held at the University of South Carolina. In January 1983, the USC Black Alumni Caucus sponsored the first university program in honor of King's birthday, and this event continued until 1986.

In 1986, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, in conjunction with the Black Alumni Caucus and the Association of African-American Students, expanded the program and moved it to the Russell House Ballroom. King's daughter, Yolanda King, was the 1986 keynote speaker. This commemorative program has since evolved into a three-day celebration. Nationally recognized speakers and native South Carolinians who have achieved success in religion, government and politics have been past keynote speakers for the Annual Commemorative Breakfast. The USC Chapter of the Black Law Students Association implemented their Commemorative Law School Program in 1989 to focus on the legal aspects of King's life and the civil rights movement, and this event is open to the public.

In 1999 then university president John M. Palms canceled classes and declared a university-wide day of service. This tradition continues today under the leadership of President Harris Pastides. USC's Day of Service celebrates King's spirit and our commitment as a University to never forget his contributions to this nation and to the world.

Black Law Students Association
A Celebration Commemorating the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A LEGACY OF EMPOWERMENT

January 12, 2012
6:00 p.m., USC School of Law Auditorium

PRESIDING:
Sutania Radlein, Third-Year Law Student
2012 President, Black Law Students Association

INVOCATION:
Aisha Success, Third-Year Law Student

MUSIC SELECTION:
Simone Martin, Second-Year Law Student

WELCOME
Robert Wilcox, Dean, USC School of Law

OCCASION
Cheslyne Brighthop, Third-Year Law Student

REFLECTIONS
Charles White, First-Year Law Student

INTRODUCTION OF MODERATOR
Ashley Cole, Third-Year Law Student

PANELISTS
Dr. Cleveland Sellers
Attorney I.S. Leevy Johnson
Rev. Dr. Chris Leevy Johnson
Judge DeAndrea Gist Benjamin
Attorney Donald Gist

INTRODUCTION OF PANELISTS
Judi Gatson, WIS-TV, moderator

REMARKS
Bobby Gist, Chair, USC 2012 Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Committee, and Executive Assistant to the President for Equal Opportunity Programs

BENEDICTION
Lamar Fyall, First-Year Law Student

A reception sponsored by the USC School of Law will follow the program. Special thanks to Dean Robert Wilcox.
Cleveland L. Sellers Jr. was born in Denmark, S.C. He left Howard University in 1962 to join the civil rights movement. In 1968 he was the only person arrested as a result of the Orangeburg Massacre, a violent melee at South Carolina State University in which three protesters were killed and another 27 injured.

During his seven months in prison (his conviction was pardoned 25 years later), Sellers decided to complete his education and fight for civil rights as an educator. He earned a master's degree in education from Harvard University and a doctorate in education from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Sellers is a former member of the S.C. State Board of Education, Second Judicial District. He taught history and African-American studies at the University of South Carolina, later becoming director of USC's African-American Studies Program. He is currently president of Voorhees College. Sellers is also a member of such groups as the Kosmos Club and the Southern Historical Association. His awards include the 2003 I. DeQuincey Newman Trailblazer Award and the 2009 Legacy Award from the United Negro College Fund.

Sellers and his wife, Gwendolyn, have three children: Nosizwe A. Sellers, M.D.; The Reverend Cleveland L. Sellers III (Lumumba); and S.C. Rep. Bakari Sellers.

I.S. Leevy Johnson was born in Richland County, S.C. He received the Associate in Mortuary Science Degree from the University of Minnesota in 1962, a Bachelor of Science from Benedict College in 1965 and the Juris Doctor from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1968. He is a member of Brookland Baptist Church and has served on numerous charitable boards and commissions.

Featured in multiple editions of “The Best Lawyers in America” and “Super Lawyers,” Johnson has also received the highest rating for ethics and legal ability awarded by the Martindale-Hubbell National rating service. In 1970, he was one of the first three African-Americans to be elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives since the turn of the century. On Oct. 18, 1999, he received the state’s highest award, the Order of the Palmetto. Johnson is chairman of the American Bar Association Center for Racial and Ethnic Diversity, and he established the I.S. Leevy Johnson Scholarship at the University of South Carolina School of Law.

Johnson is married to the former Doris Wright, assistant vice president for institutional advancement at Benedict College. They have two sons, George C. and Christopher Leevy Johnson, and three grandchildren: Rachel Hurley Johnson, Ryann Leevy Johnson and Leah Denise Johnson.

Judge DeAndrea Gist Benjamin was appointed to the S.C. Circuit Court in March 2011. She received a bachelor’s degree from Winthrop University in 1994, and she is a 1997 graduate of the University of South Carolina School of Law.

After law school, Benjamin became a judicial law clerk for the Honorable L. Casey Manning. She has also served as an assistant solicitor in the Fifth Circuit Solicitor’s Office in Columbia, S.C., and as a prosecutor for the S.C. attorney general’s office, primarily handled cases involving violent acts against women. She joined Gist Law Firm in 2001, practicing family, criminal, employment, personal injury and workers’ compensation law. In July 2001 she was appointed to the South Carolina Juvenile Parole Board. She served as a municipal judge for Columbia, S.C., from July 2004 until March 2011.

Benjamin is a member of professional groups such as the Richland County Bar Association and the South Carolina Black Lawyers Association and serves on multiple boards, including those of Edventure Children’s Museum and the Appleseed Legal Justice Center. She is also a member of the Columbia Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. and St. John Baptist Church. Judge Benjamin is married to Stephen K. Benjamin, mayor of Columbia, S.C., and they have two children.