

Joyce A. Hughes: A Celebration

FOREWORD

Scott Shimizu & Bradford McGann

The *Northwestern University Law Review* is honored to publish this special Issue, featuring works by five Black women scholars, and dedicated to the legacy of Professor Joyce A. Hughes. Born in Gadsden, Alabama, on February 7, 1940, Professor Hughes was a torchbearer, overcoming tremendous obstacles in her way to open doors for those following behind her. In 1965, Professor Hughes became the first Black woman to graduate from the University of Minnesota Law School. She then served as a clerk for a judge on the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota, another first. In 1971, Professor Hughes returned to the University of Minnesota Law School, this time as a faculty member, becoming the first woman to teach there, the first Black woman to teach there, *and* the first Black woman to be appointed as a tenure-track law professor at a majority-white law school.

Her story continued in Chicago, as did her career in academia. In 1975, Professor Hughes joined the faculty at Northwestern University Law School. In 1979, she became the first Black woman to receive tenure in the history of the university. And in yet another first, Professor Hughes went on to become the first woman and the first Black woman to serve as General Counsel of the Chicago Transit Authority. Professor Hughes retired from teaching at the end of the 2021–2022 academic year.

Though she, as many Black women do, grew up hearing the phrase “you can’t be what you can’t see,” Professor Hughes dared to bridge the gap between her present, a world defined by segregation and barriers, and the future, one where a Black woman professor could shape the minds of future generations of legal scholars. The five scholars published in this Issue not only push the boundaries of how we conceive of and apply the law but are also indelible proof of Professor Hughes’s powerful legacy.

This special Issue is also an honor long overdue. As she had done for her entire career, Professor Hughes had to fight through adversity throughout

[†] Scott Shimizu is the Editor-in-Chief of Volume 118 of the *Northwestern University Law Review*, and Bradford McGann was the Editor-in-Chief of Volume 117.

her time at Northwestern, overcoming efforts to limit the reach of her scholarship and undermine her position on the faculty. And despite her impact on Northwestern and the legal profession, her scholarship on racial equality, and her passion and care for her students, Professor Hughes has never been published in the *Northwestern University Law Review*. This Issue changes that. We are honored to feature an essay Professor Hughes wrote in tandem with her acceptance of the ABA's 2021 Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award. This award commemorates the legacies of women lawyers who have paved the way for other women in the legal profession.

On behalf of the *Law Review*, we would like to thank Professor Robin Walker Sterling, without whose outreach and dedication this Issue would not have been possible. We would also like to recognize the annual Lutie A. Lytle Conference, named for the country's first woman law professor, she herself a Black woman. Thank you to Dean Angela Onwuachi-Willig for opening the doors of this conference to the *Law Review* and inviting us to participate in its incredible community of scholars. Finally, we would like to thank Roxanne Allen, Shirley J. Hughes, and the Hughes family for allowing the *Law Review* to share in and lift up the legacy of Professor Joyce Hughes.

Legal scholarship has always served as a gatekeeping institution, available to and shaped by predominately white men, closed to the voices, perspectives, and identities of those most impacted by the law itself. It should not feel so momentous to publish an issue of a flagship law review composed of contributions by only Black women. And yet, it does. It should not have taken fifty years for the *Northwestern University Law Review* to open its pages to one of this law school's most impactful legal minds. And yet, here we are. This special Issue is necessary to recognize Professor Hughes and her achievements. We hope this serves as a call to action for law journals and academic publications everywhere to examine their pages and practices. We must all ensure the marketplaces of legal scholarship reflect diversity of experience and background as much as they do of subject and topic.

"Throughout my life, I was determined to both open and walk through doors, despite the obstacles." Professor Hughes was fond of saying this. She has worked throughout her life to open doors and keep them open. While such efforts were not always easy, the lasting impacts she has had on the law school, and the legal field writ large, show the importance of persevering in the face of adversity. There is still more work to be done, but we hope that this Issue, like Professor Hughes, will inspire future legal minds to walk through doors historically closed to them and hold them open for the next generation.

Despite the obstacles.