

E. Christopher Johnson, Jr.
Associate Professor
Director, Graduate Program in Corporate Law and Finance
The Thomas M. Cooley Law School



E. Christopher Johnson, Jr. attributes his accomplishments to a strong Christian faith, instilled in him by his parents, together with the spirit of community service consistent with Jesus' words "to whom much was given, of him much will be required." He credits his two beautiful wives, Sheryl, whose life was claimed by breast cancer in 2000, and his current wife Rhonda, who now graces his heart, as the foundations of his life. In addition, his daughter Erin, an attorney in DC, and son, Chip an advertising media buyer in New York, have and continue to make him a very proud father.

Following his graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1973, Johnson served as an Army officer in Alaska and New Jersey and was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for meritorious service. After his honorable discharge from the Army in 1978, he attended New York Law School from which he graduated with Honors in 1981.

His legal career started as an associate at a Wall Street law firm. In 1985, he left the practice of law to become a headhunter. It was with his last client, General Motors, that he made his last placement—himself—as an attorney in 1988. Accepting the role as GM's attorney handling computer law matters, he rose through the ranks as that fledgling practice flourished, to Practice Area Manager, Assistant General Counsel and ultimately, Vice President and General Counsel of GM North America, a position he held for the last seven years in a twenty year GM Career which ended with his retirement in 2008.

While at GM, Johnson championed a number of initiatives in the access to justice, access to law school and diversity arenas. His commitment in those areas led him to Thomas M. Cooley Law School, which shares this commitment, and where he currently is a law professor and director/founder of the LL.M. program in Corporate Law and Finance. He is actively involved in Cooley's high school and college pipeline programs, and its mission of access to law school.

Following a 2011 mission trip to Mumbai, India, where Johnson was exposed to the ravages and enormity of human trafficking and slavery, he felt called to join the anti-human trafficking movement. As such, he currently serves on the Board of the Michigan Abolitionist Project, co-chair of the Community Committee of the Michigan Human Trafficking Task Force, and works with a number of governmental and non-governmental entities on this global crisis. In February of 2012 he led a statewide human trafficking awareness event which was simulcast to Cooley's four Michigan campuses. He will also lead a Law Review Symposium and Conference on Corporate Responsibility and Human Trafficking on November 1-2 at Cooley.

His service over the years mirrors all of these passions and has included service in the American Bar Association, National Bar Association, State Bar of Michigan and various local and special purpose bar associations. Of note, he currently serves in the ABA House of Delegates, as a trustee of the Michigan Bar Foundation and co-chairs the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association Foundation. He has also chaired both ABA Africa and the ABA Council for Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Educational Pipeline, co-chaired the Legacy Justice Campaign for Detroit Legal Aid and Defender Association and served as a member of the Council on Legal Education Opportunity.

He is the recipient of many awards for this service including the ABA Spirit of Excellence Corporate Award, the National Bar Association Clyde Bailey Award for Corporate Leadership, the State Bar of Michigan Michael Franck and Champion of Justice Awards, the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association Champion of Justice Award and the D. Augustus Straker Bar Association Trailblazer Award. He was inducted into the National Black Law Students Association Hall of Fame in 2008.

He is also active in the community, serving as an elder and general counsel at NorthRidge Church in Plymouth, Michigan, chair of City Mission, a Detroit elementary school and K-12 tutoring/mentoring program, a member of the Board of the Great Lakes Division of the American Cancer Society, immediate past chair of the Michigan United Negro College Fund Leadership Council, and served as co-chair of the Detroit 2011 and 2012 West Point Leadership and Ethics Conferences.