

The Magic City: ABA YLD Fall Conference

By Ernestina R. Cruz

The “Magic City” proved to be just that—magical! On October 22–24, 2009, ABA YLD members from throughout the country were welcomed to the Fall Conference in Birmingham, Alabama. Hundreds were in attendance as the ABA YLD successfully launched a new year under the leadership of Kelly-Ann Clarke, who, along with the Birmingham Conference Team, served as a welcoming and gracious host throughout the three days in Alabama.

“Connect, Collaborate and Learn” proved to be the perfect theme for the three-day conference. Beginning on Thursday night attendees were treated to a *Welcome Reception* at The Wine Loft in downtown Birmingham, a venue that provided the perfect setting for conference attendees to connect with old and new friends, alike.

Birmingham Pledge

During Friday’s plenary session, James E. Rotch, a partner at Bradley, Arant, Boult, Cummings, LLP and the author of *The Birmingham Pledge*, spoke about his role in bringing to fruition The Birmingham Pledge Foundation. Rotch eloquently spoke about how as a high school student in the early 1960s he did not think he could do anything personally to effectuate change in the arena of race relations. It wasn’t until he enrolled in college at Auburn University that he recognized he had an obligation to give back to others. Building on that realization, Rotch and others organized a grassroots effort in Birmingham in November 1997 to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. That grassroots effort is now a national and global cause, with individuals from around the world embracing the message of *The Birmingham Pledge*.

Following Rotch’s presentation, those in attendance stood and recited the 116 words of *The Birmingham Pledge* setting the tone for the remainder of the conference, which focused in large part on the history and importance of the Civil Rights Movement.

They Had a Dream Too Kickoff

On Friday afternoon, the ABA YLD kicked off its 2009–2010 public service project, *They Had a Dream Too: Young Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement*. A large group marched from the conference site to Kelly Ingram Park. Along the way, the group passed the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, which the Ku Klux Klan bombed in 1963, killing four African-American girls preparing for Sunday service.

Following the video presentation of *They Had a Dream Too*, an hour-long CLE featured speakers G. Douglas Jones, the Honorable Helen Shores Lee, and John Andrew Martin. The lunch at Kelly Ingram Park was inspiring and served as a great way to launch this year’s public service project.

Great Conference, Historic Location

The Fall Gala, held Friday evening, was at the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum. The museum featured a collection of over 1,200 vintage and modern motorcycles, as well as racecars. Entertainment for the evening was lively and helped wrap up what had been a poignant day.

Then on Saturday morning, more great programs were held. Leaders of many different affiliates from across the country met with their District Representatives and other ABA YLD leaders to discuss various issues at the Affiliate Roundtable while others went to learn about different programs affiliates could implement in the “Making Connections” presentation.

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Affiliate

Still others learned about “Having It All: Work, Bar Activities, Family, and Beyond.”

Birmingham was an exceptional location for the ABA YLD Fall Conference. Both professional and social events provided attendees opportunities to “Connect, Collaborate and Learn.” It was a great conference in an historic location!

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