

**Introduction to Patricia Bell-Scott's City Bar RBG Lecture**  
May 8, 2017

In 1965, an article appeared in the George Washington Law Review titled *Jane Crow and the Law*. It was co-authored by Pauli Murray, then a Senior Fellow at Yale Law School, and Mary Eastwood, a lawyer at the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. The article observed that in no case had the Supreme Court found a law distinguishing on the basis of sex violative of the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. But "[t]he genius of the U.S. Constitution," Murray and Eastwood believed, "is its capacity, through judicial interpretation, for growth and adaptation to changing conditions and human values." As examples, the article authors pointed to Supreme Court decisions outlawing state-enforced segregation in public school, establishing the one-person, one-vote principle, and declaring the right to counsel in criminal cases, appointed and paid by the State for defendants without means to engage a lawyer. The Court could similarly recognize women's rights as part of human rights, Murray and Eastwood urged. The climate of the era, they said, was favorable for the Court to move in that direction. *Jane Crow and the Law* was a primer for the gender equality legislation and litigation of the 1970s in which I had the great good fortune to participate.

Pauli Murray was on the ACLU's Board in the 1970s, and a member of the Union's Equality Committee. When the ACLU briefed the turning point decision on the equal citizenship stature of men and women, *Reed v. Reed*, I placed Pauli's name on the brief. Though she was not on the brief-writing team, her identification of Jane Crow laws and her road map for ending them propelled our efforts.

For nearly a quarter-century, Pauli had a tender friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt. Their friendship is traced from Pauli's first sight of the First Lady in 1934, until Eleanor Roosevelt's death in 1962, in Patricia Bell-Scott's tremendous book, *The Firebrand and the First Lady: Portrait of a Friendship; Pauli Murray, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Struggle for Social Justice*. The book, a 20-year effort, is an extraordinary chronicle, informative, engaging, a remembrance of the not-so-good old days, an account that should stimulate readers to press for continuing progress.

A native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Patricia Bell-Scott is a professor emerita of women's studies and human development at the University of Georgia. She co-founded both *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women*, and the National Women's Studies Association. Books she authored before *The Firebrand and the First Lady* include *Life Notes: Personal*

*Writings by Contemporary Black Women; Flat-footed Truths: Telling Black Women's Lives;*  
*Double Stitch: Black Women write about Mothers and Daughters;* and *All the Women are White,*  
*All the blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave,* an award-winning Black Women's Studies  
textbook. Bell-Scott has filled posts at the University of Connecticut, the Wellesley College  
Center for Research on Women, M.I.T, and her alma mater, the University of Tennessee. Post-  
doctoral fellowships brought her to the John F. Kennedy School of Government, the W.E.B.  
DuBois Institute at Harvard, and the Jane and Harry Willson Center for the Humanities and the  
Arts at the University of Georgia.

Of *The Firebrand and the First Lady*, Bell-Scott wrote that her aims were to honor Pauli  
Murray's wish to share with others her friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt, to describe the path  
they lit for future generations, and to express appreciation for Pauli's aid in the book's  
development. In meeting those aims, Bell-Scott has succeeded admirably. Pauli Murray, I  
believe, would have applauded the way the story is told, and cherished the storyteller. Please join  
me now in heartily welcoming Professor Patricia Bell-Scott to the podium.