

Wilbur O. Colom

Wilbur O. Colom is an eminent attorney and businessman who has used much of his resources in the support of philanthropic works. He is the founding, senior partner of the Colom Law Firm, with offices in Columbus and Jackson, Mississippi and in Atlanta, Georgia. As a young lawyer, barely five years out of law school, he argued *Mississippi University for Women vs. Hogan* before the Supreme Court, successfully establishing the major precedent abolishing single-sex, state supported education. From there, Mr. Colom has gone on to become a nationally recognized trial lawyer and, during a distinguished twenty-eight year career, has successfully litigated many major cases and protecting the rights of his clients in such diverse proceedings as those involving the drugs Duract and Phen-Fen, the First Family Finance Company, and Kerr-McGee's Forest Products Division.

In addition, Mr. Colom is founder--with his wife, Dorothy--and publisher of Genesis Press, one of the oldest and largest African-American owned book publishing houses in the world, and is also President of Genesis Realty Company, whose holdings include the tallest office business tower in northern Mississippi and over 200 apartment units. Through his involvement with MCT Investors he has been a pioneer in establishing satellite telephone systems throughout Central Asia.

Mr. Colom is President of the International Housing Finance Corporation, a newly created company that specializes in financing affordable housing in Africa. In addition, he is also an active founder of the African Healthy Woman Program, which is instrumental in providing much-needed mammogram services to growing numbers of African women.

The focus of Mr. Colom's broad philanthropic work is his Colom Foundation, which is the charitable arm of his law firm. Founded in 2000, the Foundation is uniquely funded through a system in which 1% of all Colom Law Firm contractual proceeds are earmarked for its support. During the past three years, and among other projects, the Foundation has been instrumental, through the Washington D.C. based FirstBook program, in giving more than 375,000 to-own books to disadvantaged children throughout the southeastern United States. It has also provided support to Boys and Girls Clubs, especially those in North Mississippi, and Mr. Colom personally served as Chairman of the Fundraising Committee which recently completed a new \$1.2 million Boys and Girls Club facility in Columbus, Mississippi.

After graduating from Antioch College School of Law in 1976, Mr. Colom was appointed to its Board of Governors in 1978, and served his alma mater in that capacity until 1984. He was named DeRoy Fellow at the University of Michigan School of Law in 1983 and appointed as Adjunct Professor, University of Mississippi School of Law, for the year 1985. Very politically involved, Mr. Colom was a member of President Ronald Reagan's Transition Team and has served on the Judicial Selection Committee for Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour. For six years, he also served as Housing Bond Attorney for the State of Mississippi. As Chairman of Fundraising for the Magnolia Bar Association, Mr. Colom raised more than 1/4 of a million dollars for its Endowment Fund. Among other endeavors during his tenure on the Development Board for Jackson State University, Mr. Colom, together with his brothers, donated the Milton Colom Computer

Science Room to the University's library in memory of their deceased father.

Currently, Mr. Colom is a member of the Executive Board of the American Association for Justice and serves on the regional board of North Mississippi Boys and Girls Clubs and the board of the Greater Columbus Learning Center. He was most recently awarded the post of Orrin Hatch Distinguished Attorney by Brigham Young

University in Provo, Utah, and now serves on the Board of Directors for this program. He has received awards and citations for his volunteer and philanthropic endeavors from: the American Association for Justice, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the Magnolia Bar Association, the Mississippi Black Legislative Caucus, Jackson State University and Oakwood College, among many others.

The National Center for Black Philanthropy, Inc, in 2006 named Mr. Colom its Business Philanthropist of the year and, in 2007, with the novelist John Grisham, Mr. Colom was a principal founding benefactor of the University of Mississippi's Innocence Project.