



HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Dear Members of the HLS Community,

It is with a heavy heart that I share the news that our friend and colleague Charles Ogletree has passed away. The Jesse Climenko Professor of Law Emeritus, Charles—or Tree, as he was affectionately known—lived a life of great consequence, achieving what few can even dream. His extraordinary contributions stretch from his work as a practicing attorney advancing civil rights, criminal defense, and equal justice to the change he brought to Harvard Law School as an impactful institution builder to his generous work as teacher and mentor who showed our students how law can be an instrument for change. An HLS graduate as well as a long-serving faculty member, Charles had a monumental impact on this Law School, not just through his teaching, mentoring, and scholarship but by deepening the essential connection among teaching, research, and service.

During his time at HLS, Charles founded the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, which under his leadership became—and remains today—a leading force for scholarship, advocacy, coalition building, education, and community engagement on civil rights and equal opportunity. He also established the Criminal Justice Institute, which has provided vital legal representation to indigent defendants in the Boston area and, in the process, has trained and inspired our students to pursue lives of meaning and purpose serving others. His leadership of the Trial Advocacy Workshop equipped generations of lawyers with superb skills and also involved lawyers and judges from across the country as teachers exemplifying excellence. And he created the legendary Saturday School program, which connected our students with great lawyers and leaders to discuss law, justice, race, and equality.

Charles was a tireless advocate for civil rights, equality, human dignity, and social justice. He changed the world in so many ways, and he will be sorely missed in a world that very much needs him. For all of the ways in which he contributed, the full measure of what Charles gave us cannot be understood without talking with his students, without seeing the emotion and gratitude they feel as they describe the ways his mentorship, his generosity, his openness, and his example empowered and inspired them—how Charles Ogletree changed their lives.

Courage and conviction defined our friend and colleague. He showed that not only throughout his storied career, but in the bravery and openness he demonstrated about the illness with which he struggled in his final years. I am grateful to Charles for the friendship and kindness he extended to me throughout our years together on this faculty. He had a way of teaching not just his students, but his friends, that was powerful, decent, and giving—that without judgment helped you edge always a little closer to the best version of yourself.

We are profoundly grateful not just for the many contributions Charles made to Harvard Law School, but also for the tremendous legacy he created on questions of race, justice, and equality. In the new school year, we will come together as a community to remember our friend and colleague and to celebrate his life and contributions.

Our hearts go out to Charles's wife Pam, his children and grandchildren, and all who loved him and grieve today. May his memory be a blessing.

With friendship,

John F. Manning
Morgan and Helen Chu Dean and Professor of Law