

Excerpts from Letters of Support Written for Gordon Bonnyman's Nomination for the Morris Dees Justice Award

“Gordon’s success as a class action litigator is remarkable, but even more so is the extent to which he has influenced generations of lawyers and other advocates for the poor [...] For every effort that Gordon makes on behalf of his own clients, you can double its impact as word of a new perspective he has articulated on individual rights, a new litigation strategy he has pursued, or a startlingly bold stand he has taken on social policy makes its way around the legal services community.”

-Frank S. Bloch, Professor of Law, Social Justice Program, Vanderbilt Law School

“In the face-off with Governor Phil Bredesen and the State of Tennessee over disenrollment of almost 200,000 people from TennCare, Gordon held the line, maintaining that Tennessee had a duty to not back down from serving the uninsured and uninsurable until all possible alternatives were explored. The state is returning to Medicaid, but not without being exposed for valuing the bottom line above the people.”

-Sita Diehl, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness

“Gordon never cowers. He has been unfairly targeted and scapegoated with personal criticism by entrenched and deep-pocketed opponents of social justice and yet has never lost his heart or his conscience. He is a lion! Year in, year out, Gordon routinely works 80 hour weeks to make sure his underdog clients receive first rate legal representation, even with the litigation is complex and the other side is armed with seemingly countless attorneys and limitless war chests.”

-B. Riney Green, Attorney, Bass, Barry & Sims PLC

“He is an exceptionally sophisticated and highly polished lawyer. He is economical in both his spoken and written presentations (including the examinations of witnesses) and drives straight to the point so you can hear the rock splash at the bottom of the well. He knows how to shove cold steel to get the job done without wasting the time of the court or anyone else. In sum, Mr. Bonnyman is a credit to the legal profession.”

-Thomas A. Higgins, District Judge

“Gordon’s focus does not merely emanate from interests in law and public health policy, or the appropriate range of civil rights in our society, but also from a genuine respect for each child of the plaintiff class as a person whose promise and sanctity must not be compromised by failures to provide guaranteed medical care.”

-Robert T. Joseph, Attorney, Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP

“The truth is Tennessee is a much different and a very much better place, and the future more certain and more positive for all of our citizens, because Gordon Bonnyman has shown us the

way by personal example, brilliance of analysis, unusual human bravery, and the unique ability to find and travel ways no one else could see until the undefeatable consensus about the right was formed. He has done all of this while maintaining his ethics, and his honor, and his sense of humor, and lifting all these things in the rest of us.”

-Bill Purcell, Director of Harvard’s Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School of Government, Former Mayor of Nashville

“For a long time most of Gordon’s work has been for large classes of people, but remarkably, he maintains an acute concern for individuals and an uncanny ability to express his concern in the simplest of tasks [...]The champion who has stood up to governors, commissioners, federal judges, and corporate power also answers phones and takes messages. He has the compassion and grace to take on the simple tasks that help a family and build community for the cause.”

- Ashley T. Wiltshire, Former Executive Director of Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland

“Gordon and his dedicated staff at TJC have achieved amazing results for their clients despite some tremendous obstacles. Most notably, Gordon and TJC have come under fire from state and government officials, including the Governor of Tennessee, for challenging the state’s mismanagement of the TennCare Medicaid system. Often up against a battalion of lawyers from heavy-hitting outside law firms hired by the state, TJC has never backed down from pursuing justice on behalf of its clients despite its more limited “public interest” budget and resources.”

- Vickie Reznik, Partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP