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## Dedication - Ronald Ross Davenport - Educator, Activist, Leader

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# Duquesne Law Review

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RONALD ROSS DAVENPORT—EDUCATOR,  
ACTIVIST, LEADER

*The Honorable John Heinz\**

It is with great personal pleasure that I congratulate the *Duquesne Law Review* on its decision to dedicate the first issue of Volume 20 of the Review to Ronald Ross Davenport. Yours is a fitting tribute to a man who, during his association with Duquesne, has done much for the University, its students, and the Pittsburgh community at large.

Most of your readers will think of Ron Davenport as Dean of the School of Law: it is to the Law School that Ron has given his first allegiance and affection since his arrival at Duquesne as an Assistant Professor in 1963. A decade's service as Dean, scholarship on questions of constitutional law, numerous assignments on behalf of the University, and the dedication of a new Law School building are some of his best-known achievements while at Duquesne. Although these contributions have been vital to Duquesne, they reveal only a fraction of a man of enormous energy and commitment.

Born in Philadelphia, and generally a stranger to Pittsburgh on his arrival, Ron Davenport brought with him to our city the conviction that all Americans must be brought into the mainstream of society. After receiving his law degree from Tem-

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\* United States Senator. Senator Heinz is Chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, and serves on the Finance Committee; the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee; and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. B.A., Yale University (1960); M.B.A., Harvard University (1963).

ple and his LL. M. from Yale, he could have gone easily and lucratively into private practice. Ron Davenport, however, has never sought the comfortable or the expedient. To the contrary, by putting into practice this philosophy of inclusion, he has often been exposed to considerable personal risks, particularly when doing what he believed in was unconventional, controversial, or threatening to others who did not understand his goals.

Ron Davenport has always found life's challenges to be irresistible. In the early 1960's, his activism led him south to Jackson, Mississippi. It was there, in the wake of the ominous disappearance of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman, that a 27-year-old Ron Davenport went to court to fight Cleveland McDowell's reinstatement at "Ole Miss." Later in that decade, on the evening of the tragic death of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., the same commitment propelled him, only a few minutes after the news broke, into the streets of the Hill District to urge reason and calm in the face of fear and violence.

One of the things with which Ron Davenport has always been concerned is the role of a leader in today's society. "The quality of leadership," he wrote in 1974, "is determined by the leader's ability to put the unacceptable in acceptable form . . . the truly great leader is one who, while helping the people to understand their fears and insecurities, educates them to focus on their real needs and long-term interests." Perhaps this conception of leadership helps to explain why Ron Davenport welcomes responsibility in even the most adverse or difficult circumstances.

It should not have been surprising that, when the opportunity came in 1970, Ron Davenport rose to the challenge and became the Law School's Dean, and in the process became the first black person then or since to hold such a position in any American law school.

As Clinton Rossiter would point out, people in positions of power necessarily assert their influence in many different ways. Ron Davenport is no exception. As evidenced by his presidency of the Pittsburgh Urban League, later position as a trustee of the National Urban League, and membership on the boards of many community and eleemosynary institutions, he has given untiringly of his time and talent to promote the promise of opportunity for all, irrespective of race or color. His counsel has been

sought constantly by many in academia, business, and government, and he has become a successful entrepreneur in his own right by founding the Sheridan Broadcasting Corporation.

Ron Davenport believes that it is the contribution one makes to his fellow man that counts. He is one of those rare persons who, having climbed to a pinnacle of success, feels no compulsion to stay king of that particular hill. He is fortunate indeed to be strongly and totally supported in all that he undertakes by his wife, Judy, a successful professional in her own right. Their three children, Ron, Jr., Susan and Allison, reflect these same values that have been so evident to me during the sixteen years of our friendship. I believe that Duquesne University should be congratulated on having had the fortune and foresight to have availed itself of Ron's extraordinary leadership ability for so many years. As of December 31, 1981, he has left behind a financially and academically strengthened law school. I know his students and colleagues will join me in wishing him continued success in every endeavor.

