

**Damon Jerome Keith**  
**Doctor of Laws**

Damon Jerome Keith is a senior judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He was appointed to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan in 1967 and was elevated to the Court of Appeals by President Carter in 1977. As a law student studying at Howard University in the late 1940s, Damon Keith embraced the faith of Thurgood Marshall that it would be through the United States Constitution and the federal court system that African Americans would eventually win their freedom and equality. From that day to this Judge Keith's career has demonstrated his dedication to fundamental constitutional principles, his sense of history, and his basic belief that the law should always be interpreted and applied in accordance with equity and justice. That dedication is clearly demonstrated by his most famous judicial opinion. In *United States v. Sinclair* (1971), later unanimously upheld by the Supreme Court, Judge Keith ruled that the executive branch of the federal government has no power to place citizens under electronic surveillance without prior judicial approval. Judge Keith's lasting impact on the American legal system will be measured not only by the 1,200 opinions he authored, but by his having mentored more than forty-four minority law clerks—more than any other federal judge in history. When his former clerks recently gathered to pay him tribute, Professor Lani Guinier said “Judge Keith has been an invaluable mentor to me and a number of other black law graduates at an early and critical point in our careers. He gave encouragement, tutelage, and the opportunity to excel.” Damon Keith's honors include the Spingarn Medal of the National Association for the Advance of Colored People, the Bill of Rights Award of the Jewish Community Council, the Ellis Island Medal of the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations, the Thurgood Marshall Award of the National Bar Association, the American Judicature Society's Edward J. Devitt Award for Distinguished Service to Justice, and several honorary degrees.

To these many honors, this University is honored to add the degree of Doctor of Laws.