

Daily Journal

SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

TOP 100 2020

LITIGATION

Marcellus A. McRae

McRae is a member of Gibson Dunn's white collar defense and investigations; government contracts; media, entertainment and technology and international trade and regulation compliance practice groups. He is a former prosecutor in the major frauds section of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles.

He and colleagues successfully represented the City of Santa Monica in a recent voting rights case and he is lead counsel for Chevron USA Inc. in an ongoing environmental matter in Kern County.

Beyond his litigation work, McRae and a Gibson Dunn team played a significant role in the recent move toward racial reckoning and police reform. Far ahead of the curve, they were closely involved in researching and drafting a 416-page community-based policing report the Leadership Conference Education Fund published in March 2019.

Former President Barack Obama endorsed the report in June 2020 as a starting point to an effective guide to best practices for public safety transformation.

"This was a deeply personal thing for me," McRae said. "My entire life led up to my work on that report." The son of parents from the segregated South, he grew up a precocious academic achiever in Beverly Hills who graduated from high school at 15 and went on to UCLA and Harvard Law School—but as a youth found himself far from immune from

the racial tensions roiling even privileged neighborhoods.

"My parents tried to shield me. I heard their horror stories and they gave me The Talk on how to survive encounters with the police. But from the time I was 12 I would experience being pulled over walking in West L.A. and handcuffed and asked what I was doing there. I'll spare you the other horrible things said. It was such a shock. It was such a profound disappointment that I was living the things my father experienced in the South, no matter that I was an honor student at Beverly Hills High School."

Later, McRae's role as a federal prosecutor brought him close to the positive side of law enforcement as he worked with the FBI and local police. "That balanced my perceptions. It equilibrated my experiences. I was treated with respect." By 2014, when the dark reality of the Ferguson, Missouri, unrest over the police shooting of Michael Brown jolted the nation, McRae was determined to act. He began thinking of ways to effect change that ultimately led to his work on the policing reform report. "We wanted to challenge the assumption that there's nothing we can do about it. I wanted solutions."

This year, the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor made McRae and the Gibson Dunn team's work look prescient. "The report turned out to fit with the urgency of now," he said.

— John Roemer



**GIBSON, DUNN &
CRUTCHER LLP**

LOS ANGELES

**SPECIALTY: WHITE COLLAR,
COMPLEX BUSINESS LITIGATION**