



Eric Clay earned a bachelor's degree Phi Beta Kappa from the University of North Carolina in 1969 and a J.D. in 1972 from Yale Law School, where he was a classmate of future president Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton. Clay clerked for U.S. District Judge Damon Keith from June 1972 until June 1973. Keith later went on to become a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

Professional career

Clay worked as a lawyer in private practice in Detroit, Michigan from 1973 until 1997. He was a partner and co-founder of Lewis, White & Clay, which was considered to be one of the nation's leading black-owned law firms.[1] In addition, he also served on the executive board of the Clinton-Gore finance committee for Michigan in 1992. Lewis, Clay's law partner, was the husband of Kathleen McCree Lewis, a Clinton nominee to the Sixth Circuit who was never confirmed.

Federal judicial service

On March 6, 1996, President Clinton nominated Clay to a seat on the Sixth Circuit vacated by Ralph B. Guy, Jr. The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee approved Clay's nomination in 1996, but the United States Senate adjourned in 1996 prior to the presidential election without taking a full confirmation vote. Clinton renominated Clay on January 7, 1997. Clay was unanimously confirmed by the full Senate in a voice vote on July 31, 1997, and received his commission on August 27th.