

# PORTRAYAL & PERCEPTION

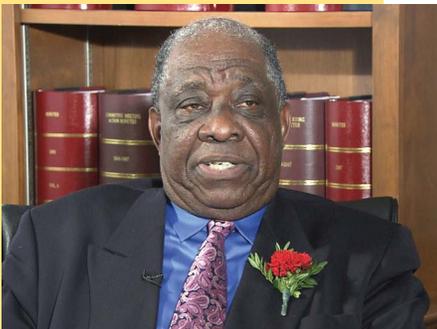
## AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN & BOYS



### Episode 8

## The New Trailblazers

Since the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, the torch has been passed to a new generation of **legal and political leadership** in the African American community in Pittsburgh.



You could call these men “The New Trailblazers.” In this episode, reporter Harold Hayes explores the careers of high-profile defense attorney and legal firm owner Blaine Jones, retired judge and distinguished attorney Livingstone Johnson, Allegheny County Council Member William Russell Robinson, and Pennsylvania Representative Ed Gainey. The program shows how they are making their mark in law and politics with **successful careers in community and personal advocacy**, while offering perspectives from those who once walked in their shoes.

### FOR TEACHERS

These guides are intended for use in sociology, information technology, media literacy, and social studies classes. Questions are geared for high school students, grades 9-12.

### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

*Portrayal & Perception: African American Men & Boys* is a series of community-based television programs produced by WQED Multimedia showcasing positive media profiles of successful African American men. Sponsored by The Heinz Endowments, this series strives to inspire discussion, elevate portrayal, and clarify perceptions of African American men and boys in the community. This guide provides further information, discussion questions, and resources for students or groups to explore the topics highlighted in each episode.

*It doesn't matter what other people think, it's what you think about yourself and what you can get accomplished. – PA Representative Ed Gainey*

# Biography



## Blaine Jones

**Neighborhood: Moon Township/Aliquippa**

**Occupation: Attorney**

**Current Organization: Blaine Jones Law LLC**

### What new projects are you working on?

Partnering with another law firm as a dual practice with emphasis on personal injury.

### How has the show impacted your life since airing?

It has touched people's lives. I've gotten remarks about the show across all demographics, not just Black, white, poor, young, rich - everything, my colleagues, the courts, the guards, police officers, a place where I go to eat. One of the most impressive, indelible remarks that I received regarding the show was from an older African American gentleman that it was so impressive, it should be shown to all children at public schools in Pittsburgh because it is such an inspirational piece. Because you take people such as myself and Representative Ed Gainey, and we are normal people who come from the community. I think sometimes these kids think that we're astronauts or these people that they can't be. But they can strive to be where we are, and I think that the biggest problem in the African American community in particular is that we have such an emphasis on entertainment - on being the next Jay-Z and Beyoncé or Kobe Bryant or Michael Jordan. The emphasis has to be and always should be on education. Because education is the key to unlocking so much more in your future.

### Who was your greatest mentor and how did he affect your life?

My greatest mentor is my dad. My dad is the one who I've always aspired to be. When I was growing up he had three jobs. His name is Rodney Jones, Sr.; I'm named after him, and he is my greatest role model. He left every day to go to work in a suit whereas my cousins in Aliquippa, their Dad was just getting out of jail and that was what they looked at. I was looking at my dad as this guy who was just doing so well and I wanted to be like him so badly. Even now, at the age of 37, I want so badly to impress him and to make him proud. He is my role model. When it comes to the law, the person who has taken me under his wing the most is Judge Joe Williams.

### What do you think are the greatest challenges and opportunities African American men face in the world today?

There are so many. I'd say self-hate because we are constantly bombarded with images of people that look like us in negative roles. African Americans are at the bottom of the barrel and have been for hundreds of years in this country. **Until we start to love ourselves and realize that we can do great things, it's going to be difficult for us.**

As an African American man, look at Joe Williams, look at myself, look at my dad, we are all people who have had to overcome. My dad and Joe had to overcome significantly more than I had to overcome. And I think it's about remaining positive, I think it's about education, and I think if you do those things and really put your sights toward education you can do really good things. I'm just a big believer in going to school and doing the best you can. So I do think there is a possibility out there, but it's a battle and it's not easy.



*Sometimes it isn't about the truth; it's about the evidence that can be proven.*  
-Blaine Jones

# Discussion Questions

*You can do it, but you have to be willing to sacrifice.*

—Blaine Jones

## CREATE YOUR OWN MEDIA!

Teachers, help your students create their own media.

Download the [Media Guide](#) and [Common Resources](#).

1. Create a brief summary of the major political beliefs and any other interesting information about your community, state, and federal representatives.
2. What are you most passionate about and willing to dedicate your hard work toward? Sketch an outline of your goals and meaningful steps to accomplishing them.
3. Judge Johnson started in family practice with his brother and father. Does your family share a common employment field? Discuss with a small group.
4. The redevelopment of East Liberty continues to be an ongoing, successful project. What other areas do you think are due for redevelopment? Reimagine one of the sites in that neighborhood and write your local congress person about your ideas.
5. What major political issues in your area are you most interested in knowing more about? Think about current events, and identify a politician or political group that is working hard to fight for the causes you are most passionate about.
6. Write a brief biography of the Honorable Thurgood Marshall's life and major accomplishments. What other African American political figures had a significant impact on life in the United States?

## FEATURED ORGANIZATIONS

**Allegheny County County Member William Russell Robinson - District 10:**  
[www.alleghenycounty.us/council/dist10.asp](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/council/dist10.asp)

**Blaine Jones Law:** [www.blainejoneslaw.com](http://www.blainejoneslaw.com)

**State Representative Ed Gainey - 24th District:** [www.pahouse.com/gainey](http://www.pahouse.com/gainey)



# Resources

**National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice:** Non-profit association that provides leaders dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice — [www.nabcj.org](http://www.nabcj.org)

**National Organization of Blacks in Government:** Non-profit organization for African Americans in public service to organize around issues of mutual concern and also use their collective strength to confront workplace and community issues — [www.bignet.org](http://www.bignet.org)

**Congressional Black Caucus:** Association of federal politicians serving as a voice for people of color and vulnerable communities served by the United States House and Senate — [www.cbc.fudge.house.gov](http://www.cbc.fudge.house.gov)

**National Black Law Students Association:** Nation's largest student-run organization representing nearly 6,000 minority law students from over 200 chapters and affiliates throughout the United States and six countries — [www.nblsa.org](http://www.nblsa.org)

**Thurgood Marshall College Fund:** Organization that helps support and represent nearly 300,000 students attending its 47 member-schools that include public Historically Black Colleges and Universities, medical schools, and law schools — [www.thurgoodmarshallfund.net](http://www.thurgoodmarshallfund.net)

**News One - Politics:** Politics page of the Black online news outlet, News One  
[www.newsone.com/category/politics](http://www.newsone.com/category/politics)

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities Ranking:** Ranking from U.S. News and Report of designated Historically Black Colleges and Universities with further information and resources about each institution — [www.colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/hbcu](http://www.colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/hbcu)

## MEDIA

**Mr. Civil Rights - Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP:** Documentary film retelling the dramatic story of Marshall's remarkable journey to becoming a Supreme Court Justice, released in the fall of 2014  
[www.southhillfilms.com](http://www.southhillfilms.com)

**The Supreme Court:** Website for the PBS documentary series on the history of the Supreme Court, including resources, lesson plans, discussion guides, and bonus interviews  
[www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt)



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4802 Fifth Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
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