

Professor John A. Powell

Keynote Speaker

2010 Southeastern Colloquium

“Racial Inequality and Poverty”

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

**Executive Director, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
Gregory H. Williams Chair in Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Moritz College of Law
The Ohio State University**

Professor John A. Powell is an internationally recognized authority in the areas of civil rights and civil liberties and a wide range of issues including race, structural racism, ethnicity, housing, poverty and democracy. He is Executive Director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University and he holds the Gregory H. Williams Chair in Civil Rights & Civil Liberties at the University's Michael E. Moritz College of Law.

Powell cautioned against assuming that Obama's election represented a postracial society. "We're too eager to push race behind us as a concept while racial inequalities remain with us in practice." Instead, he said, Obama's election is "an incredible opportunity" for the nation to examine its attitudes toward race. "All of us need to be able to look at race, including the structures and policies in place to address racial inequality," he said. "We have a tendency to define race as a psychological event and dismiss it. It's much more complicated than that. It lives in our structures and practices and our implicit thoughts and emotions."

Professor Powell has written extensively on a number of issues including structural racism, racial justice and regionalism, concentrated poverty and urban sprawl, opportunity based housing, voting rights, affirmative action in the United States, South Africa and Brazil, racial and ethnic identity, spirituality and social justice, and the needs of citizens in a democratic society. His written work includes four books, 18 book chapters, and more than 50 journal articles, op-eds, essays, and position papers. He is highly regarded as a public speaker with more than 125 invited speeches and presentations since 2003.

Previously, he founded and directed the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota. He also served as Director of Legal Services of Greater Miami and was National Legal Director of the American Civil Liberties Union, where he was instrumental in developing educational adequacy theory.

Professor Powell has worked and lived in Africa, where he was a consultant to the governments of Mozambique and South Africa. He has also lived and worked in India and done work in South America and Europe. He is one of the co-founders of the Poverty & Race Research Action Council and serves on the board of several national organizations. Professor Powell has taught at numerous law schools including Harvard and Columbia University. He joined the faculty at The Ohio State University in 2002.

Under his leadership, The Kirwan Institute has taken a national leadership role in researching, developing, and advocating for regional solutions to problems associated with racialized space. To advance this work, Professor Powell has developed an "opportunity-based" housing model that provides a critical and creative framework for thinking about affordable housing, racialized space, and how an individual's destiny is impacted by where they live. The central principal of this model is that residents of metropolitan regions are situated within a complex and interconnected web of opportunity structures that significantly shapes their quality of life. These opportunity structures include education, health care, employment, transportation, civic engagement and others.