

Three decades ago the Oregon State Bar and Oregon Supreme Court concluded that a Black man who had graduated from law school, passed the bar examination and passed the ethics examination should not be permitted to practice law in this state because:

He was obligated to prove that he did not impersonate his employer during a credit check;

They refused to accept his personal testimony strongly denying this accusation;

They declined to embrace the testimony of character witnesses, myself included, supporting him and his unquestioned character, conscience and ethics;

They concluded that his refusal to admit something he did not do - was a fatal character flaw rather than a sentinel of strength; and

They allowed themselves to ignore the controlling rule of law they had previously applied to a non-minority applicant.

In so doing, they found this Black man so lacking in character that he should not be permitted to practice law in this State.

Today, over thirty years later, that Black man has lived - and is living - a stalwart life of character. One which not only proves the error of the Oregon State Bar's and Oregon Supreme Court's verdicts as to his character but also calls on all Oregonians to act. And act now.

That Black man is Robert "Bob" Parker.

I am a native Oregonian born 65 years ago in Pendleton. I am a lawyer and have been for over 35 years. I have, in many ways, lived the professional life Bob was denied. Is that because I am white?

Bob is my friend. He has been my friend for years. We've shared our lives from the wit of young dads - to the wisdom we now pass on to our families as grandfathers.

Indeed, my son Stephen is now Bob's attorney. Bob met Stephen as a toddler. Yes, a toddler. As a Dad, I am proud of my son. I am also honored that Bob has been a part of his life too. Bob's decades of perseverance have provided my family the true model of what unrelenting strength of character is and does.

As a Oregonian and as a lawyer, however, I am disappointed in my state - our state - and my profession. I ask that collectively we now raise our strength of character to say we made a mistake and do something about it.

And now please. While there is still time in Bob's life for him to write a few chapters of fact on what his life as lawyer is ... rather than the words of fiction on what it might have been. . .

*May 9, 2021*

Michael J. Scott

*Appearing as a private citizen*

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