

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings made the following [statement](#) on March 21, 2012, honoring the life and legacy of Judge Isiah Courtney Smith:

M. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of an outstanding human being. Isiah Courtney Smith, a former judge, pioneer and, personal friend of mine, passed away on February 29, 2012 at the age of 89.

Judge Smith, also known to many as "I.C." was born on September 15, 1922 in Lake Helen, Florida. In 1940, after graduating from Euclid High School in Deland, he went on to enroll at Florida A&M College, where I also attended law school. Judge Smith's education at Florida A&M was interrupted by World War II, when he volunteered and was assigned to an intake facility near Raiford. It was at this facility where Judge Smith demonstrated his first acts of courage by marching through a segregated camp to inform the white officers of his resignation. A year later, Judge Smith was officially drafted. After his service, Judge Smith returned to his studies and graduated with a degree in history. At this point, he had also met and fallen in love with Henrietta Mays and together they moved to New York while Judge Smith attended Brooklyn Law School. They were married on January 1, 1949.

In 1954, Judge Smith received his law degree and started a practice with his college friend William Holland. This partnership would be the catalyst for the civil rights movement in Palm Beach County. Judge Smith lived in a time where there were many barriers to social mobility for those of color. Institutionalized discrimination prevented many African Americans in this country from reaching their potential, but my dear friend Judge Smith possessed skills and abilities that could not be suppressed and that he used to fight for the civil rights of others.

As the third African American lawyer in Palm Beach County, Judge Smith was well aware of the injustices occurring in his community. He became a champion of civil rights and was a voice for those who were treated as second class citizens based on the color of their skin. Judge Smith and his partner William Holland orchestrated the movement to desegregate Palm Beach County's public schools after the Supreme Court's ruling of "separate but equal" being unconstitutional was largely ignored throughout the county. In his own words, Judge Smith wisely stated that: "Nothing separate can ever be equal" – a sentiment that I strongly agree with. In addition to his quest for equal access to public education, Judge Smith and Mr. Holland fought together to integrate the West Palm Beach municipal golf course and to eliminate separate eating and bathroom facilities on Florida's turnpike. It is hard to fathom the amount of courage required to combat bigotry and hatred, but Judge Smith faced these challenges

head-on and spent his life taking a stand against those who sought to keep the status quo.

After spending many years in a successful private practice with Mr. Holland, he was appointed as a Palm Beach County Court judge in 1986 by Governor Bob Graham. During his time on the bench, Judge Smith was known for his professionalism. After serving in this capacity for six years, he retired at the age of 70.

M. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere condolences to all those who have been impacted by the loss of such a great man. My thoughts are with Judge Smith's wife Dr. Henrietta Smith, their two children Robin Smith and Reverend Cynthia Smith Jackson, and all of their family and friends during this most difficult time. I was truly honored to have known Judge Smith. He was a tremendous individual whose commitment to bettering South Florida, and working selflessly to ensure equal rights for all Americans will never be forgotten.

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