Professor Larry Gibson realized one of his dreams on a Friday late in April when the University of Maryland School of Law played host to nearly 150 African-American alumni to celebrate their scholarship, teaching and leadership. The law school held its first black alumni reunion and symposium, "Continuing the Legacy of Leadership," on April 25 and 26, 2003. Gibson, who joined the School of Law faculty in 1974 and who teaches Evidence, Election Law, and a number of courses on race and the law, organized the event.

Gibson's plans for the reunion were ambitious. "I wanted this to be both an educational event, as well as a chance for our black alumni to network with each other," he explains. "Combining a symposium with traditional reunion activities made this an exceptionally meaningful occasion for everyone who attended."

One of the highlights of the reunion included presentations by six School of Law faculty members on their research related to race. The presentations included: Professor Taunya Banks, "Setting the Record Straight: Early African-American Women Law Graduates;" Professor Garrett Power, "The NAACP's Test Case...To Sue Jim Crow Out of Maryland with the Fourteenth Amendment: Meade v. Dennistone (1938);" Professor David Bogen, "Precursors of Rosa Parks: The Common Carrier Cases in Maryland: 1870-1914;" Professor Douglas Colbert, "The Thirteenth Amendment and the Relics of Slavery in America's Criminal Justice System;" Professor Sherrilyn Ifill, "A Conversation on Race: Truth, Reconciliation and Lynching on Maryland's Eastern Shore;" and Professor Robert Suggs, "Using Local Government Discretion Affirmatively (To Promote Minority Business)."

Dean Karen Rothenberg echoed Gibson's sentiments on the value of the educational component of the reunion, "Our faculty are doing important and thought-provoking research on matters related to race. The reunion/symposium provided a perfect opportunity to present this research to an audience that were both interested in it and could benefit from it. In return, we had the opportunity to learn firsthand of our black alumni's incredible accomplishments as lawyers, judges and leaders."

Among those attending the event, "Continuing the Legacy of Leadership" was especially appropriate for alumni families who had two and, in one case, three generations of lawyers who graduated from the School of Law. Among those attending were Milton B. Allen '49, David B. Allen '69 and David M. Allen '03; William H. Murphy Sr. '46 and William H. Murphy Jr. '69; and Beverly Carter '83 and Jennifer Carter-Jones '01.

The event opened with a reception hosted by Rothenberg on Friday evening, April 25. After the reception, Gibson unveiled "Maryland's First Black Lawyers: 1877-1977"—a multi-panel exhibit celebrating a 100-year history of black lawyers in Maryland. Gibson spent nearly two years researching old records and photographs for the exhibit.
which is currently on display at the law school. In November, the exhibit will be moved to the Enoch Pratt Free Library, where it will be shown until the end of the year as part of the festivities commemorating the opening of the new annex to the central library in downtown Baltimore.

Saturday's events included faculty research presentations and alumni discussions on such provocative topics as the fight for black reparations, the role of black attorneys in reducing crime, the lack of large predominantly black law firms, and the future role of affirmative action in higher education and professional employment.

No alumni reunion is complete without traditional class gatherings (in this case, the graduation years spanned a half century from the Class of 1946 through the Class of 2002), tours of the new University of Maryland School of Law building, videotaped individual messages about careers and personal lives, and two awards sessions commemorating alumni accomplishments. Leonard Briscoe '65, Mabel Hubbard '75, Jacques Leeds '54, Solomon Reddick '60 and DeHaven Smith '58 received Dean's Awards and Solomon Baylor '51, James Bundy '49, Wendell G. Freeland '50, Lena K. Lee '51, David T. Mason '51, William H. Murphy Sr. '46 and George L. Russell Jr. '54 received Alumni Association Awards at the reunion/symposium. The reunion ended with a cabaret and dancing to the hit songs of several generations.

"We had the opportunity to learn firsthand of our black alumni's incredible accomplishments as lawyers, judges and leaders."

—Dean Karen Rothenberg

LIBRARY SPONSORS CIVIL RIGHTS RESEARCH CONFERENCE

As a prelude to “Continuing the Legacy of Leadership,” on Friday, April 25, the Thurgood Marshall Law Library, sponsored “Civil Rights Research in Maryland: Looking Back and Looking Forward.” This conference provided a forum for librarians, historians, archivists and legal practitioners, allowing them to explore current and ongoing civil rights research projects from a variety of perspectives. Representatives of the legal, library, academic and museum communities participated and shared information about current projects and research initiatives. Speakers included Denton L. Watson, a professor of American studies at SUNY College of Old Westbury and the author of Lion in the Lobby, a biography of Clarence Mitchell; Dr. Carla Hayden, director of the Enoch Pratt Free Library and president-elect of the American Library Association; and Dr. Edward C. Papenfuse, Maryland state archivist and commissioner of Land Patents for the Maryland State Archives.