



## Consumer law icon Harold Williams is moving on: Plain Dealing

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**Sheryl Harris, The Plain Dealer**  
By

Harold Williams would like to retire quietly, but that's not going to happen.

In a law career spanning 3-1/2 decades, Williams has helped shape employment and consumer law in the state of Ohio.

He worked for decades on the Black Shield case, which forced Cleveland to hire and promote black police officers; handled a case that ended discriminatory staffing at state liquor stores; and, more recently, took on robo-signing and foreclosure cases.



Gus Chan/Plain Dealer

Harold Williams says he's learned in a 35-year law career that being prepared is everything when it comes to taking a case to the courtroom.

Last year, when he accepted an award from Ohio's attorney general for his work on behalf of consumers, Williams said that as a law intern working with poor people in the South, he saw his clients stand taller and become confident with a lawyer by their side.

"I saw then the power of the law to make a difference -- to people who are vulnerable," he said. "It's about empowering them and giving them the type of dignity they deserve."

Williams, 68, will retire at the end of the month as managing attorney for the Cleveland Legal Aid Society's consumer law unit. In 35 years working for an agency dedicated to getting poor and vulnerable people access to legal representation, Williams has done great things without great ego.

"He's stayed focused on the bottom line of why we're all here . . . to protect Ohio consumers. He's pursued that methodically and strategically," said Linda Cook, senior staff attorney for the Ohio Poverty Law Center. Yet, she said, "he doesn't really draw attention to himself."