STUDENTS IN PROFESSOR Larry Gibson’s seminar, Race and the Law: The Maryland Experience, spend the semester researching and discussing specific cases that impacted equal opportunity in education, employment, criminal justice, and political participation in Baltimore and beyond. On a sunny morning in February, the students boarded a coach bus outside the law school to embark on a journey that would bolster their in-class experience: Professor Gibson’s annual civil rights tour of Baltimore.

Professor Gibson, armed with a wealth of knowledge from his distinguished career of promoting civil rights and justice, takes his students around the city to visit the locations their assigned cases took place. The tour gives students a deeper understanding of what they learn in class and of the history of the community.

“Professor Gibson is an amazing guide, in part because he has an encyclopedic knowledge of seemingly every single block in Baltimore City and its relation to civil rights issues,” Galen Rende ’20 says. “However, he also lived through and was personally involved in many of the legal and historical issues covered in the class and on the tour, which makes for an incredibly powerful experience.”

The tour crisscrossed the city from the University of Maryland, Baltimore campus to Morgan State University, stopping along the way at key landmarks and institutions at the center of these cases. In between stops, Gibson explained the historical context surrounding each case and offered a detailed narrative of the social and political climate that existed at the time.

Although the cases the students would be researching were argued between 1898 and 1955, Gibson seamlessly tied the outcomes of those cases to current racial justice issues in Baltimore. In one instance, he noted that a 1918 housing segregation case in the Upton neighborhood involved a property just blocks from where Freddie Gray was picked up by police in 2015.

The tour concluded at the Pratt Library where Gibson took the students to the African American and Maryland departments. Here, he showed them the vertical files full of newspaper clippings, photographs, and other historical documents that would help them research their cases and understand the people and places impacted by the court’s decisions.

The experiential learning opportunity was highly regarded by students. “Professor Gibson forces you to go beyond Westlaw and the law library; he challenges his students to immerse themselves in the cases and get to know Baltimore in a more intimate way,” Taylor Nichols ’20 reflects. “[He] ensured we walked away from that tour and each class with new information; he’s truly a vessel of knowledge that Maryland Carey Law is immensely fortunate to have.”

Learn more about the cases on the next page…
James Jenkins was indicted for refusing to occupy the seat assigned to him by the conductor on a Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis Electric Railway train car. Jenkins objected to the indictment, arguing that he was being denied equal protection of the law, and his objection was sustained by the lower court. The state appealed and the indictment was subsequently reversed.

When Edmond D. Meade, a young African American pastor, contracted to purchase a home on an almost entirely white block, a group of neighbors filed suit to prevent the family from occupying the premises. The white neighbors prevailed and Meade was unable to complete the purchase, and the home owner was prevented from selling or leasing the property to anyone of African descent in perpetuity.

When the all-white community surrounding the new Morgan College property found out about the land’s intended use as a campus for African Americans, they began an unsuccessful campaign to revoke the sale. Soon after, the school moved to the new location and began construction of Carnegie Hall, now the oldest building on the Morgan State University campus.

The two cases focused on the refusal to admit African American students to Maryland Institute College of Art, with the school’s standing as a private institution as an argument for not having to admit students of color.
In 1943, the Enoch Pratt Free Library denied Louise Kerr, an African American woman, admission to its library training class. Kerr sued on the grounds that denying her entry to the program violated her Fourteenth Amendment right for equal protection of the laws. The District Court ruled in favor of the Library and Board; Kerr was successful in her appeal to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

On July 11, 1948, several black and white members of The Young Progressives of Maryland were arrested and subsequently prosecuted for playing interracial tennis matches in Druid Hill Park, an act that defied the Board of Recreation and Parks’ segregation policy.

The Maryland Court of Appeals ruled that the University of Maryland, School of Nursing unconstitutionally denied Esther McCready admission solely because she was African American. McCready won the case and began class on September 5, 1950.

These cases dealt with the application of Brown v. Board of Education beyond schools to recreational facilities such as public beaches, bathhouses, and swimming pools.