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New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
November 13, 2007

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New Jersey Institute for Social Justice Appoints Cornell William Brooks, Esq., New Executive Director

NEWARK, NJ – Following an extensive national search, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ), a Newark-based research and advocacy organization, has appointed Cornell William Brooks, Esq., a civil rights litigator and communications attorney from Washington, DC, as its new Executive Director effective immediately.

Mr. Brooks previously worked as a Senior Counsel with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), where he worked on legal and policy matters promoting small business and media ownership diversity and also directed the FCC's Office of Communication Business Opportunities. Serving in this capacity, he led efforts to increase financing available to small, minority- and woman-owned businesses through regulatory and industry initiatives. Prior to his FCC service, as a U.S. Department of Justice trial attorney, Mr. Brooks secured the then largest government settlement for victims of housing discrimination based on testing and filed the government's first law suit against a nursing home alleging housing discrimination based on race. His civil rights experience includes serving as Executive Director of the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington and as trial attorney with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. As the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Council, Mr. Brooks oversaw a regional program of fair housing testing and public education in Washington, DC, Northern Virginia, and metropolitan Maryland that served as the basis of impact litigation. In 1998, Mr. Brooks ran as the Democratic Nominee for U.S. Congress for the 10th District of Virginia. As a graduate of both Head Start and Yale, he campaigned as an advocate for public education, affordable healthcare, and fiscal responsibility.

A fourth-generation ordained minister, Mr. Brooks earned a Bachelor of Arts, with honors, in political science from Jackson State University and a Master of Divinity from Boston University School of Theology, with a concentration in social ethics and systematic theology. After seminary, Mr. Brooks earned a Juris Doctorate from Yale Law School, where he served as a Senior Editor of the Yale Law Journal and Member of the Yale Law and Policy Review. He served a judicial clerkship with then Chief Judge Sam J. Ervin, III, on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. While studying at Boston University as a Martin Luther King Scholar, Mr. Brooks was awarded both the Oxnam-Leibman Fellowship for outstanding scholarship and promoting racial harmony and the Jefferson Fellowship for outstanding scholarship and excellence in preaching.

As an attorney, activist, congressional candidate, and pastor, Mr. Brooks has spoken before congregations of diverse faiths, as well as the United Nations Sub-Committee on Discrimination, business organizations, bar associations, labor unions, civil rights groups, schools, and colleges in the U.S. and Europe. As a columnist, he has written for several newspapers on contemporary politics, ethics, and faith.

John Farmer, Jr., NJISJ Board President and former New Jersey Attorney General, said of Mr. Brooks' arrival: "We are delighted to have an individual of Cornell's experience, character, and commitment to social justice assume leadership of the organization to extend and build upon the Institute's efforts to improve the lives of New Jersey's urban residents. His hands-on experience working with diverse stakeholder groups across a wide range of issues, within both the public and private sectors, immediately infuses our work with added value and relevance and enhances our institutional capacity to serve the citizens of New Jersey. We feel lucky to have him on board."

"Serving others through service as Executive Director of NJISJ is an extraordinary gift of opportunity, for which I am both humbled and honored," said Mr. Brooks. "The Institute's work promoting economic opportunity, catalyzing justice reform, defending civil rights, and advocating for responsive government touches lives and ultimately transforms communities. As Executive Director, my immediate priorities are simple and twofold. First, build upon the Institute's demonstrated record of rigorous analysis, compassionate vision, and pragmatic programs that serve the cities and citizens of New Jersey. Second, work with, beside, and as but one of many community partners who tirelessly labor for cities that are a testament to the promise of New Jersey. Whether the issue is youth gangs, predatory lending, the sub prime loan market crisis, prisoner reentry, or expanding opportunity in the building trades, NJISJ is working with so many to craft solutions that work – and work for folks for whom issues aren't policy but real problems. I am happy to be part of these efforts."