



*District and Municipal Court Judges' Association
&
Superior Court Judges' Association*

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March 25, 2021

Recent local and national events compel Washington's professional associations that represent more than 425 judicial officers to reassert our commitment to eliminate racism, prejudice, and inequality in our courts.

While individual judicial officers perform our daily work independently, we speak with one voice to condemn racial stereotyping, bias, impartiality, and insensitivity toward persons appearing before us and the communities we serve. We are governed by a Code of Judicial Conduct, which judicial officers must conscientiously strive to uphold. This Code is built on the premise that "[a]n independent, fair and impartial judiciary is indispensable to our system of justice." To realize this objective, we are bound to "maintain the dignity of judicial office ... and ... [to] aspire at all times to conduct that ensures the greatest possible public confidence in [our] independence, impartiality, integrity, and competence." When we fail to meet the baseline requirements of the Code of Judicial Conduct, we diminish public trust in our courts; an outcome we abhor.

This past year has challenged judicial officers, courts, and society at virtually every level. Given this upheaval and the examination and introspection it has generated, Washington's trial courts have doubled down in our efforts to identify and eliminate prejudice, inequality, and inequity throughout our justice system. We actively recruit people of color to consider a career on the bench; educate on all subjects, including judicial ethics, changes in the law and subject area competence, and racial equity; and we work with our justice system partners to develop resources to help community members avoid court involvement, such as the Eviction Resolution Program that assists tenants and landlords agree to and fund payment plans for rent arrearages to avoid eviction actions. As community leaders, judicial officers must at all times model the standards of fairness, impartiality, integrity, and competence. We explicitly denounce words or behavior that violate our professional obligations to the public we serve. And we renew our commitment to eliminate practices and conduct that impede "equal justice under law."

Sincerely,


Michelle K. Gehlsen
DMCJA President


Judith H. Ramseyer
SCJA President



WASHINGTON
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November 25, 2020

To Current and Future Members of the Judiciary, Justice Partners, and Communities Served by Washington Courts:

"The judiciary should be leaders in the elimination of barriers to equal justice and set an example for others by its behavior."¹ Recent events compel the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association (DMCJA) to affirm its commitment to this principle and to reinvigorate its leadership in this area through new initiatives. Race-based disparate treatment by courts or denial of judicial employment, service, or contracting opportunity is antithetical to justice. Judges must vigilantly prioritize and lead eradication of racism in the judiciary.

In 1993, the DMCJA created a Diversity Policy Statement that expresses a two-fold imperative that judges must ensure that persons of diverse backgrounds and experiences are treated with respect and understanding in their courtrooms, courthouses, and communities, and they must implement diversity participation in all aspects of their individual court operations. For its own operations, DMCJA's Bylaws require diverse Board of Governors (Board) membership. See DMCJA Bylaws, Art. VII, Sec. 1.

As an Association, DMCJA bolsters its member judges' effectuation of the imperatives in the DMCJA's Diversity Policy Statement through action and resources. The DMCJA, and its member judges, lead the elimination of racism in the judiciary, including with the following actions:

- ❖ Diversifying Board membership most recently in 2016 and in 2020
- ❖ Voting as its first priority, *Identifying and Eliminating Systemic Racism in our Justice System*
- ❖ Tasking the DMCJA Diversity Committee with development of an action plan to implement the Association's first priority. Earliest action items under consideration include:
 - Diversifying the bench by expanding the Judicial Pro Tempore Training conducted in partnership with the Washington State Bar Association to broader, racially inclusive, audiences.

- Addressing factors that contribute to racial inequities in the court processes and outcomes, such as the cost of pre- and post- judgment services as a barrier for those defendants who are unable to afford them.
- Providing judges with tools and guidelines to use in their own recruitment and training of court staff and judges pro tempore.
- ❖ Advocating for necessary technology resources to administer justice virtually through a public health crisis, and disseminating the guidance necessary for judges to ensure that all parties regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, English proficiency, disability, socio-economic concerns, or self-represented status have the opportunity to participate meaningfully.²

To earn and maintain public trust and confidence in a fair justice system, judges must conscientiously reason and act justly, and lead others in doing likewise. Racism in any manifestation is abhorrent and unjust. Judges must lead the eradication of racism from the judiciary. The DMCJA and its member judges commit to doing so.

Resolutely,



Judge Michelle K. Gehlsen
DMCJA President



Judge Charles D. Short
DMCJA President-Elect



Commissioner Rick Leo
DMCJA Vice-President



Judge Jeffrey R. Smith
DMCJA Secretary/Treasurer



Judge Samuel G. Meyer
DMCJA Immediate Past President



Judge Karl Williams
DMCJA Board Member Position 1



Judge Tyson R. Hill
DMCJA Board Member Position 2



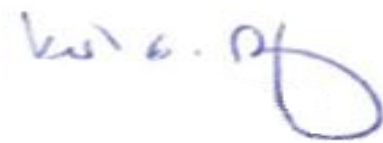
Judge Thomas W. Cox
DMCJA Board Member Position 3



Judge Drew Ann Henke
DMCJA Board Member Position 4



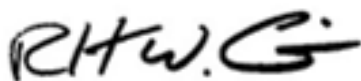
Judge Laura Van Slyck
DMCJA Board Member Position 5



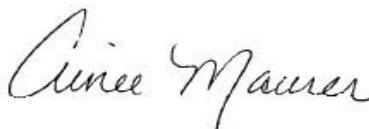
Judge Kevin G. Ringus
DMCJA Board Member Position 6



Commissioner Paul Wohl
DMCJA Board Member Position 7



Judge Robert W. Grim
DMCJA Board Member Position 8



Judge Aimee Maurer
DMCJA Board Member Position 9



Judge Anita Crawford-Willis
DMCJA Board Member Position 10



Judge Dan B. Johnson
DMCJA Board for Judicial Administration Liaison



Judge Mary C. Logan
DMCJA Board for Judicial Administration Liaison



Judge Tam T. Bui
DMCJA Board for Judicial Administration Liaison



Judge Rebecca C. Robertson
DMCJA Board for Judicial Administration Liaison

¹Excerpt from the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association's Diversity Policy Statement (1993).

²See, e.g., Conference of Chief Justices/Conference of State Court Administrators, *Guiding Principles for Post-Pandemic Court Technology, A pandemic resource from CCI/COSCA*, NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS, June 16, 2020, nscs.org/pandemic.