



WASHINGTON  
COURTS

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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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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



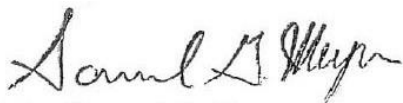
Judge Charles D. Short  
DMCJA President-Elect



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



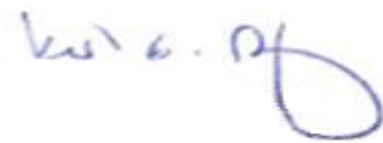
Judge Thomas W. Cox  
DMCJA Board Member Position 3



Judge Drew Ann Henke  
DMCJA Board Member Position 4



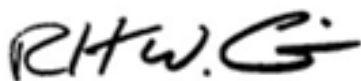
Judge Laura Van Slyck  
DMCJA Board Member Position 5



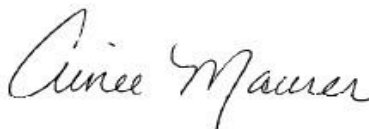
Judge Kevin G. Ringus  
DMCJA Board Member Position 6



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

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

<sup>2</sup>See, 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, [nsc.org/pandemic](https://nsc.org/pandemic).