



## Supreme Court of Illinois

June 22, 2020

### **SUPREME COURT RELEASES STATEMENT ON RACIAL JUSTICE, NEXT STEPS FOR JUDICIAL BRANCH**

*Will start recruitment for new Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer*

The events of recent days and weeks have exposed frailties in our public institutions and brought to the forefront the disproportionate impact the application of certain laws, rules, policies and practices have had on the African American population, the Latinx community, and other people of color in Illinois and nationally.

Racism exists, whether it be actualized as individual racism, institutional racism or structural racism, and it undermines our democracy, the fair and equitable administration of justice, and severely diminishes individual constitutional protections and safeguards of full citizenship with the attendant rights and benefits sacred to all. People of color have no less expectation of fairness, equity and freedom from racial discrimination than others, yet they are continually confronted with racial injustices that the Courts have the ability to nullify and set right.

The [Preamble to the Illinois Constitution](#) opens with **We, the People of the State of Illinois** and in this context the Illinois Supreme Court, a co-equal branch of government in the State of Illinois, affirms to all of the people of the great State of Illinois its commitment to the protections and benefits extended to every citizen and court user through fair and equitable constitutional and procedural governance.

The administration of justice must be accessible, it must be fair, and it must be equitable. Where frailties in the disposition of justice exist, we will recognize and acknowledge them and seek to rectify any injustice.

Here are a few steps the Court has taken to begin to address these issues within the Judicial Branch:

- In 2012, the Illinois Supreme Court created the Commission on Access to Justice to promote, facilitate and enhance greater access of underserved populations and communities to civil courts.
- In 2015, the Supreme Court Committee on Equality was formed to advance the Court's commitment to a judicial system free of bias in which every user and employee of the court could feel fairly treated, safe, and respected, and to promote

equality and fairness in the administration of justice and facilitate a high level of trust and public confidence in the courts and its judicial officers.

- In 2017, the Supreme Court Committee on Equality partnered with the American Bar Foundation to participate in a judicial decision-making study that revealed judges are just like everyone else in their susceptibility to implicit bias – formed from influences which unconsciously affect decision making. These findings created an opportunity for engaging the judiciary and justice partners about implicit bias and prompted the creation of an [Illinois Pattern Jury Instruction on implicit bias](#).
- In 2019, the Illinois Supreme Court unveiled its first [Strategic Agenda](#) and [Operational Plan](#) for implementing changes within the Judicial Branch. This Agenda adopted core values for the Judicial Branch: fairness, accountability, integrity, and respect.
- In 2020, the Supreme Court Committee on Juvenile Courts recently formed a working group on disproportionate minority representation and disparate outcomes for children and youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

But there is still much work to be done.

To further these efforts, the Court is announcing the recruitment of a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) for the Judicial Branch. The CDIO will serve as a leader in proposing practices, procedures and rules for Illinois' courts to protect the constitutional rights of the public we serve. This executive-level hire will work with the Supreme Court, the Administrative Director and Court leaders throughout the Judicial Branch to achieve the Supreme Court's strategic goals related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

We recognize that these steps are only part of a long process that requires continuous research on the role of racism in our society and actions necessary for its eradication. The Court will continue to advance initiatives to achieve its mission to protect the rights and liberties of all by providing equal justice for all under law.

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