

News Release



New Jersey Courts

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Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court

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Statement of the New Jersey Supreme Court

The recent killings of unarmed African Americans have shocked the conscience of our nation and led to feelings of anger, frustration, and hopelessness.

These are painful times for our country that continue a painful history of injustice for African Americans. We must answer the challenge of ensuring that all men and women, especially people of color, are offered the same opportunity and treatment by the court system.

Justice and fairness lie at the heart of our legal system. And those standards must apply equally to all. Wherever it exists in the criminal justice system, we must identify and root out bias in all forms. The courts must be a place where court users, attorneys, and court employees can all expect to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect, regardless of their race or background.

The impact of racial injustice touches all of American society. In New Jersey, we have tried to confront systemic racism and other forms of bias in our courts.

Through Criminal Justice Reform and juvenile justice initiatives, we have made significant strides in reducing the jail and juvenile detention populations, especially for people of color. We have begun to reform the Municipal Court system by safeguarding the fundamental principles of equal access and treatment for all. Through legal rulings, we have changed the way courts evaluate eyewitness identification evidence in trials, including cross-racial identifications.

Those are laudable efforts, but there is more work to be done.

Although we cannot comment on specific cases, it is clear that racial disparities still exist in the justice system, from children of color in our foster care system who wait longer to be placed in permanent homes to the disproportionate incarceration of black men and women in our jails and prisons.

As members of a community dedicated to integrity and fairness, we must all enhance our knowledge and understanding of discrimination.

Within the Judiciary, we must continue to dedicate time to train judges and staff to recognize implicit and explicit bias. Through the Supreme Court Committee on Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement, we will continue to work with community stakeholders to develop solutions to longstanding disparities in access to our courts, such as a careful evaluation of preemptory challenges and how they can lead to juries that do not reflect the makeup of our communities.

We must be willing to assess and measure progress in order to improve our ability to provide equal treatment for all court users. We recognize that this challenge to our organization and society as a whole will require continued long-term commitment, dedication, and focus to institute lasting change.

For many Americans, this has been a time of reflection, but we must do more. We must seize on this opportunity to come together as a country. We must listen to one another. And most importantly, we must eradicate systemic barriers that stand in the way of justice.

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner

Justice Jaynee LaVecchia

Justice Barry T. Albin

Justice Anne M. Patterson

Justice Faustino J. Fernandez-Vina

Justice Lee A. Solomon

Justice Walter F. Timpone

Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts.

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