



King County

District Court

Office of the Presiding Judge

W1034 King County Courthouse

516 Third Avenue

Seattle, Washington 98104

Telephone: (206) 477-1720

Fax: (206) 296-0596

The Honorable Matthew York
Chief Presiding Judge

Othniel Palomino
Chief Administrative Officer

March 21, 2022

Re: King County District Court's Commitment to Ending Systemic Racism and Bias

The King County District Court (KCDC) judges emphatically reaffirm their commitment to equality and to ending systemic racism and bias, both explicit and implicit, wherever it is found. This commitment is in line with the Court's mission statement, which is to serve the public by:

- *Providing an accessible forum for the fair, efficient and understandable resolution of civil and criminal cases; and*
- *Maintaining an atmosphere of respect for the dignity of all individuals.*

To uphold our mission, continued vigilance and education are required by the judges of the Court to meet these objectives. All judges must actively prioritize and lead efforts to eradicate racism or bias in the justice system. We explicitly denounce words or behavior that violate our [professional commitment to the public we serve](#).

KCDC's commitment to eliminate racism and bias in the judiciary is demonstrated by the following actions:

1. Addressing factors that contribute to racial inequities in the court's processes and outcomes, such as the cost of pre- and post- judgment services that act as a barrier to those defendants who are unable to afford them.
2. Supporting an active KCDC Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Committee that strives to raise the awareness of KCDC employees and judges regarding the importance of an equitable criminal justice system. The ESJ committee – comprised of judges, directors, managers, and court and probation staff – arranges regular training, discussions, and provides resources inside and outside the court. Many of these trainings are shared with other agencies around the State.

3. Participating in a three-day, intensive workshop held for all judges to educate them on critical race theory and the history of systemic racism, with a similar training made available to management and staff.
4. Continuing our consistent education and training on the history of racism and its impact on the judicial system during quarterly meetings comprising the entire bench.
5. Encouraging regular attendance by KCDC judges in statewide judicial trainings on implicit bias, systemic racism, and judicial ethics put on by the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association and the Administrative Office of the Courts.
6. Installing and utilizing technology 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, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic concerns, or self-represented status have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the Court.

Earning and maintaining public trust and confidence in our justice system requires that judges act impartially and with awareness to end systemic prejudice, as well as to lead others in doing likewise.

Racism is abhorrent and unjust. All judges must take the lead in eradicating racism from the judicial system. As your judges, we are committed to our employees, ourselves, and the community to fight racism.

Resolutely,



Matthew York
Chief Presiding Judge
On behalf of the Judges of King County District Court