

**Superior Court of the State of Washington  
for the County of King**

**JAMES E. ROGERS**  
**Presiding Judge**

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June 8, 2020

Dear Members of the King County Legal Community:

We judges, commissioners, and staff of the King County Superior Court have watched the events of these past weeks with compassion, sorrow, and reflection on the injustices at play. As the largest trial court in the State, we acknowledge that, at times, our court system has upheld injustice. Today's judiciary must reconcile its past with the present and work towards a better future.

We take this opportunity to share with you our understanding of our role in the justice system and our commitment to you as members of the community we serve.

We recognize that the justice system exists as a check on the excesses of power by other branches of government and by individuals who seek to engage in acts of oppression. As Dr. Martin Luther King famously said, "morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."

We understand that the justice system exists in a world of historical and contemporary racial oppression. At times, judges have acted to reinforce racist acts. At times, court decisions have wrongfully deprived Black Americans of their liberty in criminal cases and have precluded them from fully engaging in civil society, for example, by upholding racist real estate deeds that prevented moving into certain Seattle neighborhoods.

Racism is intolerable in our society and in our justice system. We acknowledge that, as elected judges, our role in addressing racism differs from that of other

elected officials like our governor, mayors, and legislators. As judicial officials in trial courts, we act case by case. The way we affect racial justice is demonstrated through the way we treat and listen to individuals who come before us, in the way we craft and explain our decisions, and, most of all, through our decisions.

We acknowledge that in our work, we must vigilantly maintain open minds and continuously address the implicit biases that we all hold to prevent these individual biases from influence on our work on behalf of the justice system. Perhaps the most insidious risk posed by the judiciary is not the action of a rogue judge, but the risk of collective harm caused by individual biases that we all have. We as a Court constantly engage in trainings and conversations to uncover and address bias to assure that our Court is here to provide a fair process for all.

In our work to ensure fairness for all, we must provide a fair and unbiased trial process. We must assure fairness for those oppressed and for those whose conduct our community may find reprehensible. This process must guaranty to all that they will be substantively heard and it must protect the constitutional rights of victims and, at the same time, the rights of those accused.

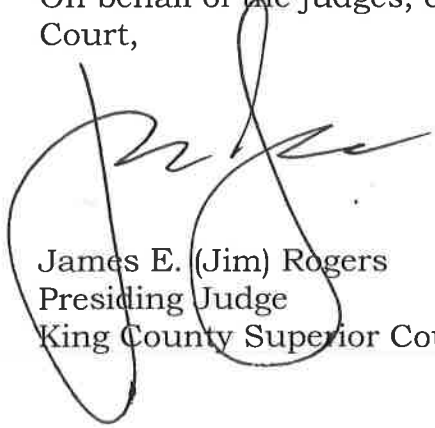
As members of the justice system working as judges for the county bearing the name of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we know that we must do more to live up to his name. In an attempt to do so, we make the following commitment:

- We will remain accessible and engaged. By listening to, and learning from, our community stakeholders, we become better at what we do. We appreciate opportunities for community interaction so that we can learn from our community and educate others about our justice system.
- We will continue to learn to be better judges. By continuing to educate ourselves not only on the existence of implicit bias, but on tools we have at our disposal to recognize and check bias, we can serve our community well. Through continuing education and interaction with our colleagues and the community, we become more thoughtful, insightful decision-makers.

- In considering issues that come before us case by case, we will meticulously comply with our oath of office, which requires us to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Washington, and to faithfully and impartially discharge our duties as judges to the best of our abilities.
- We judges and commissioners will continue the work that we are engaged in now to improve the justice system through our courts, statewide and local groups, and committees and organizations.

We have much work to do.

On behalf of the judges, commissioners and staff of King County Superior Court,



James E. (Jim) Rogers  
Presiding Judge  
King County Superior Court