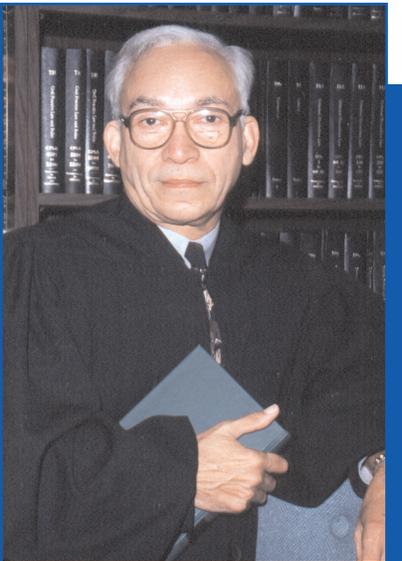




Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities

Fall 2004



**HON. LEWIS L. DOUGLASS
CHAIR**

IN 2003 AND 2004, THE FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MINORITIES hosted two major leadership conferences for the New York State Unified Court System (UCS) employees. In May 2003, the first conference was held for the downstate judicial districts at the Judicial Institute in White Plains, New York. The second conference focused on the upstate judicial districts and was held in May 2004 at the Marx Hotel in Syracuse, New York. As a Commission, dedicated to improving the positions of people of color, we are constantly monitoring and examining the improvements for people of color within UCS.

At each conference, a theme that was consistently reiterated was the securing of jobs in managerial and policy-making positions. Numerous concerns were raised. Subsequently, in small workshops, these concerns were discussed in great detail. The attendees presented to the conference body their recommendations for addressing these concerns.

The recommendations from the downstate conference were compiled into the report, *Findings from the Leadership Development Conference*. The Commission presented this report at our annual meeting with the Chief Judge—Honorable Judith S. Kaye, the Chief Administrative Judge—Honorable Jonathan Lippman, and the First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge—the Honorable Ann Pfau.

Although the Commission continues to press for increases in promotion opportunities for minorities, it is important that we also acknowledge progress when made. Over the past few months, several significant appointments have occurred within the State and Federal court systems:

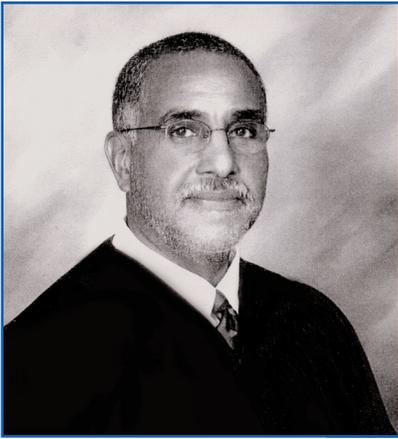
- Honorable Leslie G. Leach was appointed as the Administrative Judge of the Queens Supreme Court, filling the vacancy left by the Honorable Steven Fisher after he was appointed to the Appellate Division, Second Department.
- Persons of color have filled approximately twenty percent (20%) of the new lieutenant positions.
- Tracy Pardo was promoted to Chief Clerk of the Bronx Supreme Court, Civil Term—thus becoming the first woman chief clerk in the Bronx and the first Hispanic chief clerk in New York City.
- Carey Wone was appointed Deputy Chief Clerk of the Supreme Court, Queens County—making him the first Asian American appointed to a deputy chief clerk position.

On the federal bench, our own, the Honorable Sandra L. Townes, of the Appellate Division, Second Department and Honorable Dora L. Irizarry were confirmed by the United States Senate to serve on the United States District Court, Eastern District for the State of New York. The Honorable Townes will be the first African American woman to serve on the Eastern District bench. The Honorable Irizarry will be the first Hispanic to serve on the Eastern District bench. Each will take the federal bench in August 2004.

We extend our congratulations to our colleagues. ■

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Interview with Queens Administrative Judge

On May 5, 2004, Honorable Leslie G. Leach was appointed Administrative Judge of the Eleventh Judicial District—the State Supreme Court of Queens County. In announcing the appointment, Chief Administrative Judge Jonathan Lippman said that “Justice Leach is a stalwart in New York’s judiciary...and has been at the forefront of innovative courtroom practice.” Justice Leach has been afforded national attention for his presiding over the Queens Treatment Court, whose focus has been on the rehabilitation of drug-addicted defendants and a reduction of recidivism. We recently visited Justice Leach on one of his rare opportunities to preside in the Drug Treatment Court. It was evident that he and his staff cared about both the letter of the law and the litigants whose lives would be affected by his rulings. He remembered details about them and commended or chastised them for their progress in the treatment program.

Honorable Leslie G. Leach

MOST OF OUR READERS ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH YOU AND YOUR BACKGROUND. COULD YOU TELL US HOW YOU GOT TO THIS STATION OF LIFE (YOUR FIRST NOTION OF BEING IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION, EDUCATION, PLACES YOU HAVE WORKED, FAMILY, THE COMMITMENT IT TOOK TO BE WHERE YOU ARE TODAY)?

I am truly a product of New York: I grew up in St. Albans Queens, graduated from Andrew Jackson High School, received a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Queens College, and earned a Juris Doctor from Columbia Law School. I decided to go into the legal profession because I believed that law impacted every aspect of life. I also believed that the law should protect and enhance people’s lives. After a summer internship with the Steel Union when African American employees sued the union and management for discrimination, I developed a keen interest in labor relations. I went into the private sector first with the law firm Jackson Lewis Schintzler & Krupman and then with the Southern Cooperative Development Fund, Inc. in Louisiana. Between 1981 and 1993, I worked in the New York court system as a court attorney in the Criminal Court, the Supreme Court—the Appellate Division, and the Court of Appeals, the highest court in the state. During my career journey, I married and raised two boys with my wife. When the Administrative Judge position was offered to me, I discussed the pros and cons with them. It was through a family consensus that I decided to accept the challenge.

THERE IS A GREAT SIGNIFICANCE IN YOUR APPOINTMENT AS THE ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE OF QUEENS COUNTY, ESPECIALLY SINCE QUEENS COUNTY HAS ONE OF THE LOWEST PERCENTAGE OF MINORITIES IN UPPER MANAGEMENT IN THE COURT SYSTEM. WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS FACTOR?

There is a special pride when your community (the ladies in church, people I grew up with, and colleagues) recognizes you for your hard work. I do not feel any additional pressure for the uniqueness of my position because I choose to focus on my ability to do the job. I also recognize that there have been the Betty Allen’s and George Bundy Smith’s who are proud of me and/or who have influenced my career.

LOOKING AT YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO WORK ON THE MOST? (I.E., LESS EXPERIENCE IN A CERTAIN AREA OF THE LAW)

I am comfortable with both criminal and civil law. However, I feel that I need a better understanding of the technical procedures in civil law. I would also like to further develop my skills in case management in civil law.

YOU HAVE COMMENDED THE FORMER ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE, THE HONORABLE STEVEN W. FISHER, FOR THE LEGACY HE LEFT IN THE OFFICE—SUCH AS THE CREATION OF THE DRUG TREATMENT COURT. WHAT IS THE LEGACY THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE, NOT JUST IN THE JUDICIAL REALM, BUT ALSO TO THE CITIZENS OF QUEENS COUNTY?

I am still learning both sides of the Criminal Law and the Civil Law as they function in the Queens court system. However, I do envision a court that functions well with outside agencies and is user-friendly for the litigants. I would like to leave the citizens of Queens County with a more efficient and equitable functioning court.



DO YOU HAVE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOMEONE LOOKING TO FOLLOW A SIMILAR CAREER PATH?

Knowledge is key—study hard and learn your subject matter well. Have a healthy respect for the law. Develop good management and listening skills. Be decisive and have an even temperament. Also, remember that there are always second chances. We all make mistakes along the way. But, we can resolve to change our lives and still obtain our dreams. I initially flunked out of college. Once I decided to focus on my life goals, I studied and worked hard to acquire the success I have today. ■

The Leadership Development Conference

ON MAY 24, 2004, THE COMMISSION HOSTED *the Leadership Development Conference: Courts in the 21st Century* for the upstate judicial districts. The conference represented Part II as was presented for the downstate judicial districts at the Judicial Institute in May 2003. The purpose of the conference was to bring together minorities from all levels of the court system to assess the progress that has been made in the courts concerning racial matters and to voice concerns about racial matters that may affect promotions.



The attendees listened to the presentations from the morning panels.

Ninety New York State Unified Court System (UCS) employees attended the conference. The attendees were excited about having the opportunity to interact with UCS administrative and managerial staff and to meet colleagues from the upstate judicial districts. They came prepared to express their concerns and were eager to develop solutions to these concerns.

Supreme Court Justice (1st Judicial District) and commission member, Honorable Richard B. Lowe III, gave an overview of both the previous and current status of minorities in UCS. Many of the attendees felt that his presentation reflected their concerns. More importantly, they wanted to know what could be done to have a more equitable representation of minorities in upper management in the court system.

The Honorable Jan H. Plumadore made his remarks as the newly appointed Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Courts outside New York City. Judge Plumadore moderated the Promotional Process Panel. The panel included Administrative Judges Sharon S. Townsend (8th Judicial District) and James C. Tormey (5th Judicial District) and Executive Assistants David L. Sullivan (to Deputy Administrative Judge for Courts outside New York City), Harry Salis (7th Judicial District), and G. Russell Oechsle (6th Judicial District). After the panel's presentation, the attendees had the opportunity to express some of their concerns regarding the promotional opportunities during the question and answer session.



The Honorable Richard B. Lowe III presented data on minority employees in the New York State Unified Court System.

The Workforce Diversity Panel made the final presentation of the morning. This panel included Lauren DeSole (Director of Human Resources—Office of Court Administration), Alice Chapman Minutello (Deputy Director, Human Resources for Workforce Diversity), Michael J. Moore (Coordinator of Out-



Honorable Eduardo Padro moderated the Workforce Diversity Panel, which included Alice Chapman-Minutello, Lauren DeSoto, Michael J. Moore, and Elizabeth Candreva.

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The Promotional Process Panel included (from left to right) Honorable Jan H. Plumadore, David L. Sullivan, Honorable Sharon S. Townsend, Harry Salis, Honorable James C. Tormey, and G. Russell Oechsle.

The Leadership Development Conference continued...

reach and Recruitment, Workforce Diversity), and Elizabeth Candrea (Assistant Managing Inspector, Office of the Inspector General for Bias Matters). The panel's task was to explain the functions and duties of the Human Resources Division, particularly with focus on the Office of Workforce Diversity, and the Office of the Inspector General for Bias Matters. Commission member, Honorable Eduardo Padro (Supreme Court Justice, 1st Judicial District), presented different scenarios to the panel and asked them to explain how their office would handle the hypotheticals. The attendees were also allowed to present their own scenarios during the question and answer session. ■



Elizabeth Candrea responded to questions from the audience.



Alice Chapman-Minutello answered questions while Lauren DeSoto looked on.

Leadership Development Conference Luncheon



Lunchtime was an opportunity for meeting with old friends and making new ones. The Honorable Jan H. Plumadore provided us with anecdotes of his judicial career. Colleagues from the upstate judicial districts had the opportunity to learn more about the jobs that each of them performed. The luncheon also provided a rare opportunity for both administrators and non-administrative employees to discuss various issues. The attendees discussed both the activities from the morning and their anticipation for the afternoon sessions.



1. The attendees dined on lunch and funny stories told by the Honorable Jan H. Plumadore.



2. Commission Chair and Supreme Court Justice, Honorable Lewis L. Douglass, made a point to Marie Villari, Management Analyst (8th Judicial District), while her Administrative Judge, Honorable Sharon S. Townsend, listened.



3. Commissioner Bill Etheridge shared experiences with Harry Brand, retiring Executive Assistant (8th Judicial District), and Harry Salis, Executive Assistant (7th Judicial District).

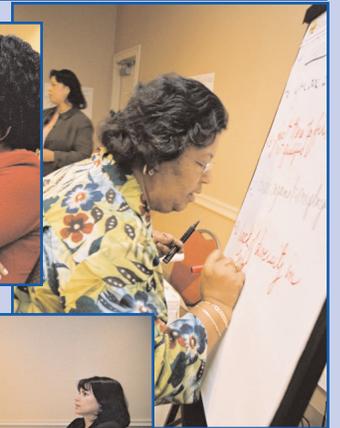
4. Alice Chapman-Minutello, Deputy Director of Human Resources for Workforce Diversity, visited with Honorable Sharon S. Townsend.

WORKSHOPS:

The attendees spent the afternoon in one of three workshops:

1 PERCEPTION OF BIAS:

This was a workshop on how to eliminate bias and insure fair and equal treatment for all within our Unified Court System.



2 PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (NON JUDICIAL):

This workshop explored the effects of competitive and non-competitive examinations with respect to a level playing field and the impact of upward mobility on minorities.



3 EMBRACING LEADERSHIP FOR A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE:

The focus of this workshop was to learn how to develop networking, leadership, managerial, and administrative qualities and skills.



As the attendees exited their respective workshops, they expressed their appreciation for the camaraderie and a sharing of their concerns. They especially liked having the opportunity to discuss their concerns and to offer possible solutions.

Recommendations:

The attendees returned to the plenary from their afternoon workshops to highlight some of the recommendations that resulted from their discussions. A great deal of thought and dialogue was devoted to identifying the issues confronting minority employees in the court system. The attendees outlined in great detail their proposed solutions to improve the promotional opportunities for minorities in the New York State court system. A more detailed list of recommendations will be provided in the conference report this fall.

1 PERCEPTION OF BIAS:

1. There should be periodic diversity training required for all personnel, starting from the highest-ranking official to the lower ranks.
2. There should be an independent and local Equal Employment Office (EEO).



2 PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (NON JUDICIAL):

1. Court Administration should expand both training and preparatory opportunities.
2. There should be both a consolidation and expansion of outreach efforts.



3 EMBRACING LEADERSHIP

FOR A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE:

1. Learn to think outside the box.
2. Implement a daily S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threat) Analysis process in your life.



Women First

HISPANIC WOMAN CONFIRMED FOR FEDERAL BENCH



Honorable Dora L. Irizarry

The United States Senate confirmed Honorable Dora L. Irizarry to the Eastern District bench, making her the first Hispanic appointed to the federal bench in Brooklyn. Honorable Irizarry has built her professional reputation on her thorough investigative skills as an assistant district attorney, her understanding of the people she serves, her genuine concern for litigants, and fairness in her judicial rulings. Her resumé indicates that she is accustomed to “firsts,” as she was the first Hispanic woman named to the Courts of Claims and to the Brooklyn Supreme Court. In a recent interview, Honorable Irizarry expressed her thoughts about her path to the federal bench.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE LEGAL PROFESSION AS YOUR CAREER PATH?

I have known since I was eleven years old that I wanted to be a female “Perry Mason.” I liked the way he helped people and I thought this would be the best way to serve my community. Honorable Eduardo Padro, currently a Supreme Court Justice, recruited me for Yale University—where I was one among the first four Hispanic women from the mainland to attend Yale. Upon graduation from Columbia Law School, I went to work in the Bronx District Attorney Office because there was a lack of minorities in that area of law (most minority lawyers usually worked in civil rights or legal aid law). In 1995, I received my first judgeship in the New York City Criminal Court, later advancing to Acting Justice of the Supreme Court.

IN 2002, GOVERNOR GEORGE E. PATAKI ASKED YOU TO RUN FOR STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL ON HIS TICKET. WHY WOULD YOU RISK YOUR JUDGESHIP, A POSITION THAT YOU LOVED, FOR A NO-GUARANTEED CAREER MOVE?

It was an opportunity I could not say no to because it was the first time a Hispanic woman ran for a statewide office. If elected, I would have been the first woman, never

mind the first Hispanic woman, to be in that position. In that role of opening the way for other Hispanics or other minorities, I could not see how I could turn down that opportunity. If I had declined, when would that opportunity come again? Sometimes, you have to step outside of your comfort zone to be able to move ahead and accomplish things that may be for the greater good. That was my motivation to take the risk.

GOVERNOR PATAKI HAS SAID THAT YOUR CONFIRMATION “MARKS AN HISTORIC DAY FOR NEW YORK’S HISPANIC COMMUNITY AND FOR ALL NEW YORKERS.” WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESPONSE TO YOUR APPOINTMENT?

The support and pride of the Hispanic community has been tremendous. The various bar associations—Hispanic, African-American, and Asian—were instrumental in my appointment because they demanded diversity on the bench. Young people (elementary, high school, and law students) have sent me e-mails and letters reminding me that we have met or requesting my appearance at one of their functions. If I have inspired one of them to believe that someday this could be them, then perhaps my role is that of the latina “Perry Mason.” ■



TOWNES FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN CONFIRMED FOR EASTERN DISTRICT BENCH

In June 2004, Honorable Sandra L. Townes, a State Appellate Division Judge, became the first African-American woman appointed to the United States District Court of New York, Eastern District. Judge Townes, a 1976 graduate of Syracuse University School of Law, started her legal career as an Assistant District Attorney in Onondaga County. At that office, Judge Townes was known as an intelligent, hard working, and fair prosecutor. At that office, she continued to be promoted until she became the Chief Assistant District Attorney for Onondaga County in 1986.

In November 1987, Judge Townes was elected to the City Court of Syracuse where she served until her election to the Supreme Court in November 1999. Thereafter, Governor George E. Pataki appointed Judge Townes as an Associate Justice of the Appellate Division, Second Judicial Department.

We congratulate and wish Judge Townes much success. We know that she will continue to make great contributions as a jurist on the federal bench. ■

BRONX FIRST WOMEN CHIEF CLERK

In July 2004, Tracy Pardo was promoted to Chief Clerk in the Bronx Supreme Court, Civil Term. Ms. Pardo is the first woman chief clerk in the Bronx and the first Hispanic chief clerk in New York City.



Tracy Pardo

Ms. Pardo has a diverse background in the Unified Court System. She began her career sixteen years ago as a Court Officer with the Bronx Family Court. In 1987, she was promoted to Associate Court Clerk with the New York City Civil Court, where she served as the assistant supervisor of Bronx Landlord and Tenant Court. In 1990, Ms. Pardo was promoted to Principal Court Clerk of that court and served as the Commissioner of Arbitration and the supervisor of the housing court. Since 1998, she has served as Deputy Clerk in the Bronx Family Court. Ms. Pardo serves in several organizations and committees, including the Cervantes Society, National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Exam Committee and Gender Bias Committee (Office of Court Administration), and Mosholu Avenue Apartment Corporation. ■

WONE NAMED ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHIEF CLERK



Carey Wone

Carey Wone was promoted in May 2004 to Assistant Deputy Chief Clerk for Queens Criminal Court. Mr. Wone is an example of someone willing to work hard in the system and to move around to other courts to be promoted. He started in the court system in 1992 as a court officer in Queens Criminal Court. He worked there for four years and was promoted to Senior Court Clerk. He moved for one year to Manhattan Court and then requested a transfer back to Queens Criminal Court, where he worked for the next three years and was ultimately promoted to Associate Court Clerk. Mr. Wone transferred to Kings Court for three years before returning to Queens Criminal Court last October. He said he always returns to Queens because "it is home."

Mr. Wone graduated from Baruch College but said his preparation for his current position came primarily through on-the-job training. His recommendation for anyone looking for similar success in the court system is to "get a good education and understand how the court system works by learning about the paperwork, rules, and procedures." Mr. Wone's ultimate goal is to become a Chief Clerk. He acknowledged that while the position is competitive, experience and good people and communications skills will help him attain his goal. ■

WHAT'S NEW

- *Commission to Promote Public Confidence in Judicial Elections Report:* A 29-member commission (with at least one member from the twelve judicial districts) compiled an extensive report with recommendations to improve the public's confidence, and therefore participation in, judicial elections.

To review:

www.nycourts.gov/reports/JudicialElectionsReport.pdf

- Four Court Attorney positions have been posted. If you are interested or know of others who would be interested, contact Commissioner William Etheridge (Chief Clerk of New York City Criminal Court) at: WETHERID@courts.state.ny.us.

If you know of any promotions, recognitions, or events that the Commission should include in this newsletter, please contact our office at 212 428-2790. To view this newsletter online: <http://nycourts.gov/ip/minorities/>

CONTACT US

If you have concerns you would like to present to the Commission, please contact us at:

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MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities to educate and advise decision makers in the New York Court System on the issues affecting both minority employees and litigants; and to implement recommendations developed to address said issues.



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