



# Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities

Summer 2011



HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS  
CHAIR

## Message from the Chair

**THE FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MINORITIES** (“Commission”) is committed to working with court administrators to ensure a diverse workforce within the court system. We met with each of the Presiding Justices of the four departments of the Appellate Division of New York State to exchange ideas and information on issues of diversity.

**The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities is also currently working with** the University of Buffalo Law School to increase opportunities for law student graduates within the Appellate Division, Fourth Department.

We believe that by improving the legal writing skills of minority law students, they will be afforded a greater opportunity to ascend to positions of leadership and increase the pipeline for attorneys to serve on the bench.

**The Commission also seeks to applaud the efforts of those committed to a judiciary that reflects the people that it serves.** We honored Governor David Paterson for the diversity of his judicial appointments during his tenure as Governor. With twenty-two appointments of judges of different sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity, his legacy will be one of promoting diversity and bringing different points of view to the bench. The reception which occurred on November 30, 2010 was well attended.

**Finally, On June 28, 2011, we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities' establishment as a permanent entity in the New York State Unified Court System.** Over the years, we have seen major strides towards equal justice in part due to ensuring that the voices of people of color— whether as employees, litigants or judges – are heard. The Commission has been an integral part of this process and we will continue to be vocal on issues of racial diversity and cultural sensitivity in the courts and legal profession. ■

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## GUARDIAN'S ASSOCIATION FIFTH ANNUAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH AWARDS

**ON MARCH 22, 2011, THE GUARDIANS ASSOCIATION OF THE NEW YORK STATE COURTS, INC. CELEBRATED WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH** with its award celebration program in the Bronx Supreme Court Rotunda. The Guardian Association of New York State Courts, Inc. is a fraternal law enforcement organization of court officers, court clerks, and court assistants in the Unified Court System. The program honored phenomenal women who demonstrated a tireless commitment to fairness, equality and respect for minorities within the New York State Judicial System. Joyce Y. Hartsfield, the Executive Director of the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities was among the honorees for her work with the Commission. ■

EUGENE JORDAN PRESENTING AWARD TO JOYCE Y. HARTSFIELD



# FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MINORITIES

## 20th Anniversary Dinner

**JUNE 2011** marked the 20th Anniversary of the implementation of the **Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities** as a permanent entity in the New York State Unified Court System. The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities is an outgrowth of the original Commission created in 1988 by Chief Judge Sol Wachtler.

**ON JUNE 28, 2011**, the original members and staff of the **New York State Judicial Commission on Minorities** reunited with members of the current Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities to celebrate 20 years of a positive impact on the advancement of minorities in the courts, and for promoting cultural diversity and sensitivity. ■



HON. JONATHAN LIPPMAN AND  
HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS



FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS SPEAKING AT THE COURT OF APPEALS



LINDA CHIN, ESQ, CHIEF JUDGE JONATHAN LIPPMAN AND  
EDNA WELLS HANDY, ESQ.



HON. SOL WACHTLER  
AND HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS



HON. JUDITH KAYE & JUSTICE LEWIS DOUGLASS



JOYCE HARTSFIELD, DR. MARIA RAMIREZ AND  
HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS



FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS

## FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS – A Man of Vision and Purpose

**The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities is named in honor of the distinguished attorney and civil rights leader, Franklin H. Williams.**

In 1988, Chief Judge Sol Wachtler appointed Mr. Williams chair of the New York State Judicial Commission on Minorities responsible for conducting extensive research on the perception and treatment of minorities in the court system.

**A Native New Yorker, Mr. Williams received his law degree from Fordham University in 1945.** He served as an assistant counsel to Thurgood Marshall, special

counsel to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (“N.A.A.C.P.”) From 1950 to 1959, Mr. Williams was the Director of the west coast N.A.A.C.P and was credited with major inroads in the civil rights movement involving cases on school desegregation and restrictive covenants.

**Mr. Williams was also instrumental in the development of the Peace Corps and eventually became the Peace Corps Regional Director for Africa.** The Peace Corps currently honors his memory with the Franklin H. Williams Awards given thus far to over 90 outstanding returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

**Franklin H. Williams went on to serve as the United States Ambassador to Ghana.** ■



## MEETING WITH PRESIDING JUSTICES OF THE APPELLATE DIVISION

### THE FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MINORITIES BELIEVES THAT DIALOGUE IS CRUCIAL TO ACHIEVING DIVERSITY.

Therefore, we were very pleased that each of the Presiding Justices of the four departments sat down with the Commission to discuss cultural sensitivity and diversity within the Appellate Division. The Commission met with Presiding Justice Luis A. Gonzales, Appellate Division, First Department, Presiding Justice Gail A. Prudenti, Appellate Division, Second Department, Presiding Justice Anthony V. Cardona, Appellate Division, Third Department and Presiding Justice Henry J. Scudder, Appellate Division, Fourth Department. At the meetings, the Presiding Justices highlighted their



NADINE JOHNSON, ESQ., HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS, HON. ANTHONY CARDONA, JOYCE Y. HARTSFIELD, DR. MARIA RAMIREZ AND MICHAEL J. NOVACK, ESQ.



HON. KATHIE DAVIDSON, KARLENE DENNIS, ESQ., LENORE KRAMER, ESQ., HON. RICHARD B. LOWE III, HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS, HON. GAIL A. PRUDENTI, HON. ARIEL E. BELEN, JOYCE Y. HARTSFIELD AND NADINE C. JOHNSON, ESQ.

departments efforts to achieve a diverse workforce. The Commission was able to provide additional suggestions to further improve their outreach to minority communities. We will continue to foster communication with the Presiding Justices as there is always more that can be done. ■

## BUFFALO LAW SCHOOL GREETES FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MINORITIES

ON FEBRUARY 7, 2011, Justice Rose H. Sconiers, Dean Makau Mutua of the University at Buffalo Law School and Presiding Justice Henry J. Scudder of the Appellate Division, Fourth Department met to discuss improving the legal writing skills of minority law students. The meeting occurred at the University of Buffalo Law School and included Patricia Morgan, Chief Clerk, Craig Peterson, Chief Appellate Court Attorney, Charles Patrick Ewing, Vice Dean for Legal Skills, Melinda R. Saran, Dean for Students Affairs and several legal writing professors. The meeting sought to incorporate the writing format at the Appellate Division into the curriculum of the Law School's legal methods program. With the success of this initiative, it is hoped to be replicated at other law schools throughout the state. ■



VICE DEAN CHARLES PATRICK EWING, HON. HENRY J. SCUDDER, DEAN MAKAU W. MUTUA, HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS.



FACULTY AT BUFFALO LAW SCHOOL AND APPELLATE DIVISION, FOURTH DEPARTMENT MEETING WITH THE FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MINORITIES.

## Judicial Mentor Program

IN AN EFFORT TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF JUDGES OF COLOR, the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities implemented a program to provide judicial mentors for attorneys who wish to become a judge. The mentor pro-

gram came about after a forum sponsored by the Commission in 2008 entitled, "How to Become a Criminal or Family Court Judge in New York City". That forum was a result of previous Commission meetings with Mayor Bloomberg's

Office regarding efforts to increase diversity on the bench. Attorneys in the process of applying for a judgeship and would like a mentor should send a request to [kdennis@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:kdennis@courts.state.ny.us). ■

# DIVERSITY AND ALL THAT JAZZ

## 23RD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON RACIAL & ETHNIC FAIRNESS IN THE COURTS

On April 27 - April 29, 2011, the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts (Consortium) hosted its 23rd annual conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. The National Consortium consists of Commissions from over 37 states that meet annually to discuss national issues in the state courts that impact upon racial and ethnic bias. This conference included plenary sessions and workshops on issues such as diversifying law firms, treating litigants with respect regardless of race, color or creed and the neuroscience of decision making and bias in the Courts. The conference closed with a report from each state on the initiatives in the courts over the last year.

Commission member, Justice Eduardo Padro was appointed to the Consortium Advisory Panel and Commission member, Justice yvonne lewis continues to serve on the Consortium's Board. Judge Edward Clifton from Rhode Island was elected Chair of the Consortium for 2011-2013. ■



HON. YVONNE LEWIS AND  
HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS



HON. ANNA BLACKBURNE-RIGSBY, HON. ROSE H. SCONIERS, ATHONEY JENKINS, ESQ., HON. JUDY HARTSFIELD, HON. MARILYN KELLY

**OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION**  
**Franklin H. Williams**  
**Judicial Commission on Minorities**  
**25 Beaver Street, Room 861**  
**New York, New York 10004**

### COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Rose H. Sconiers, *Chair*  
Hon. Ariel E. Belen, *Vice-Chair*  
Hon. Lewis L. Douglass, *Chair Emeritus*

T. Andrew Brown, Esq.  
Hon. George B. Daniels  
Hon. Kathie Davidson  
William H. Etheridge  
Felix C. Fernandez  
Nadine C. Johnson, Esq.  
Lenore Kramer, Esq.  
Hon. yvonne lewis

Hon. Doris Ling-Cohan  
Major Eric Long  
Hon. Richard B. Lowe, III  
Hon. Stephen Miller  
René Myatt, Esq.  
Hon. Eduardo Padró  
Dr. Maria Ramirez  
Hon. Robert E. Torres  
Marilyn Vializ  
Adrienne Williams, Esq.  
Hon. Troy K. Webber

Joyce Y. Hartsfield, *Executive Director*  
Karlene Dennis, *Associate Counsel*

## JUDICIAL FRIENDS ASSOCIATION LAW SERMON



MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY AND COURT PERSONNEL OUTSIDE CORNERSTONE BAPTIST CHURCH

**ON MAY 15, 2011**, members of the Judicial Friends Association, the Tribune Society and other court personnel came together at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Brooklyn New York for the annual Law Sermon. The Judicial Friends Association consist of local, state and federal Judges of color within the State of New York. The Law Sermon is an opportunity for the jurists to reaffirm their oath to do justice to those that appear before them and to share fellowship with the community. ■