



ATTORNEY REGISTRATION AND DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION  
of the  
SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS

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The Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission has a unique and significant responsibility for assuring that the legal system achieves its goal of equal justice for all citizens. Given the ARDC's role and responsibility in the legal system, it is important for us to reinforce our commitment to addressing injustice by actively combatting the evils of racism and social inequity. These times of racial and civil unrest have caused us to think deeply and differently about how we may more effectively meet our obligation to combat racism and support justice for all, which we publicly share with hope and commitment.

## **Illinois ARDC Statement on Racism**

The killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer, along with recent killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks and other Black Americans by both law enforcement officers and others, brings into sharp focus the fears and injustices that continue to devastate people of color in our country. The ARDC, the regulator of the Illinois legal profession, joins with those seeking justice in denouncing the institutional racism that plagues our communities of color. These tragic deaths have compelled us to consider how the ARDC can play a meaningful role in addressing racism and promoting social equity.

The ARDC's first step must be to continue to examine its regulatory processes to identify and change any practices that allow bias to permeate our agency. In 2015, the ARDC appointed a Diversity and Inclusion leader, and since that time, we have addressed the equity of our internal processes and procedures. Through our D & I initiative, we have also provided continuing D & I education to our staff and volunteer board members, delivered D & I education to the profession, cultivated relationships with affinity bar associations, and increased representation of attorneys of color in upper levels of the organization. We will leverage our ongoing D & I initiatives in further identifying and addressing bias within our agency, and in all aspects of this agency's undertakings.

The ARDC also commits to use its regulatory authority to engage and educate members of the legal profession on addressing and eschewing racism, including implicit bias. Further, the ARDC commits to holding all in the legal profession accountable for protecting the rule of law and making the justice system available to and equitable for all members of our communities.

The special responsibilities of a largely self-governing profession require that lawyers aid other lawyers in observing the rules of professional conduct and assist others responsible for the

administration of the justice system in fulfilling their duties. In the preamble to those rules, the Supreme Court instructs that lawyers are public citizens who should seek to improve the administration of the system of justice and should further the public's understanding of and confidence in the rule of law and the justice system. Conduct rules provide specific requirements, including prohibiting lawyers from engaging in discriminatory conduct.

Simply put, there is no place in our profession for those who cannot practice without discrimination based upon a person's color. We recommit ourselves to creating and maintaining a disciplinary system that identifies and holds attorneys responsible for conduct that includes racial bias, inequity or intolerance.

Finally, the ARDC commits to an ongoing focus and action on this issue and to transparency on that commitment. We will provide regular reports of our efforts, focusing on our D & I, regulatory and educational initiatives and analysis of public data from our disciplinary caseload. Our annual reports will contain a comprehensive discussion of our yearly efforts. In these ways, we will provide information to the Supreme Court, the profession and the public to fairly gauge and hold the ARDC accountable for the success of our efforts.

The ARDC is hopeful about the possibility of change. History shows us that significant change is possible. In the past, lawyers have taken bold actions that have championed the rights of historically marginalized communities, led to the eradication of corrupt practices in the justice system and brought improvements in the fairness of that system. Currently, called to action by the brutal killings of Black Americans, the public is sending a clear message that racism must end. We join in that call and accept the responsibility of responding to that call in the work of our own agency.

Released on behalf of the ARDC Commission,

Jerome E. Larkin,  
ARDC Administrator, and

Lea S. Gutierrez,  
ARDC Director of Diversity and Inclusion