

# CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL COMPETENCY

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September 25, 2018  
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
225 Spring Street, OVS Conference Room, Wethersfield

### MINUTES

**Attendees:** Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson (Chair), Isabel Alvarez, Troy Brown, Samuel Bruder, Sandra Cardone, Alison Chandler, Linda J. Cimino, Patrick (PJ) Deak, Juanita Halepas, Esther Harris, Zarin Kapur, Meghan Korn, Michael Palmieri, Philip Strambler, Spiro Uyar, Ewa Wojewodzki, and Shawna Woodard

**Absent:** Cristina Johnson, Ines Nieves, Daisy Ortiz, and Felix Rodriguez

Chief Justice Robinson called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

The minutes of the July 24, 2018 meeting were unanimously approved.

### Lunch and Learn

Alison Chandler and Esther Harris presented a topic for the next Lunch and Learn, tentatively scheduled for November 9, 2018. The topic is “office culture and our bodies” – common idioms we say that make people feel uncomfortable and the impact on the office culture. The research Alison and Esther have found says that a person’s self-esteem directly affects health outcomes and performance at work. This lunch and learn will explore the research to raise our awareness and avoid pitfalls.

### Subcommittee Reports

**Gender Fluidity and Judicial Branch Policy 618:** Sam Bruder distributed a side-by-side comparison of the current language in Policy 618 (dress code) and two proposals to allow for all gender identities and expressions, including those who are gender fluid or gender nonconforming. Chief Justice Robinson recommended that we invite the Executive Director of Superior Court Operations to our next meeting to get some guidance on how to move forward, and to include Human Resource Management professionals. Shawna Woodard will schedule a Subcommittee meeting with these representatives to discuss the issue, review the proposals, and invite them to a full committee meeting.

### Cultural/Religious Issues with ID Verification

PJ Deak described a scenario that has occurred many times in court. When giving an oath or notarizing a document, the clerk must see a photo identification to verify the individual’s identity. The issue is when the person whose identity must be verified is wearing a full face covering for religious or cultural reasons. Court Operations would like guidance on how to respectfully handle these situations. Zarin Kapur previously spoke to Aida Mansoor from the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut for guidance. She said it is acceptable to ask the person to come behind closed doors with another female employee to verify the identity. Chief Justice Robinson recommended that we draft a response on what employees should do and include our research. It is our expectation that this procedure will be distributed to the Branch via the Executive Directors or the Office of the Chief Court Administrator.

## **Diversity Week 2018**

Sam Bruder distributed the calendar of learning events for the week and provided an overall status of registration, classes, catering, and volunteer assignments. At the Chief's recommendation, Sam will forward the Branch-wide emails about Diversity Week to the Supreme/Appellate clerks so they may participate. Also, some family support magistrates have expressed interest in attending again this year. Chief Justice Robinson requested that an invitation is sent to the Governor, Speaker of the House, President Pro Temp of the Senate, and the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus or their designees. We may also invite the Chief State's Attorney and the Chief Public Defender or their designees. Sam will contact External Affairs to coordinate the invitations.

## **Black History Month 2019**

Troy Brown reported that an invitation was sent to Stephen L. Carter, bestselling author of several novels, including "*Invisible: The Forgotten Story of the Black Woman Lawyer Who Took Down America's Most Powerful Mobster*." He is also a former law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and is the William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law at Yale University. Mr. Carter has not responded to the invitation as of yet.

## **Cultural/Diversity Training and MCLE Credit**

This agenda item was tabled for a future meeting.

## **Announcements and Upcoming Events**

Chief Justice Robinson:

- The Action and Reflection Subcommittee will present part two of *The Loving Generation* on October 30, 2018 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. in Wethersfield.
- Promote participation in "Foundation in Cultural Responsiveness (FCR) 100" during Diversity Week on October 16 and October 25 at ITBD in New Britain.
- With Justice Kahn, is planning training for the Public Defender's Office and the New Haven bar.

Troy Brown:

- Chief Justice Robinson will be the keynote speaker at the Discovering Amistad Freedom Institute Implicit Bias Workshop on October 12, 2018 at Southern Connecticut State University.
- CSSD will recognize Hispanic Heritage Month on October 2, 2018 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. Contact Meghan Korn to register.

PJ Deak:

- His community organization partnered with I.R.I.S. to show a film produced by Susan Sarandon. This was a very successful fundraiser.
- Requested a recommendation for a person in the New York area to speak on gender equality.

Linda J. Cimino:

- Attended training in July sponsored by the Women's Consortium called "Race and the Myth of Colorblindness." The speaker Mara Gottlieb was a phenomenal speaker and should be invited to speak at a future Judicial Branch event.

Samuel Bruder:

- To explore making future Diversity Week Opening Celebration days a “no short calendar day” to allow more employees to participate.

### **New Business**

No new business was presented at this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.