

Statement from the Judicial Council of the Alabama Lawyers Association

October 13, 2020

Recent events arising out of the shooting of unarmed Americans of African descent have resulted in protests across America calling for racial and social justice. Not since the 1960's have we seen a call for change on a scale that we have witnessed in recent weeks and days. Large numbers of Americans from all ethnic groups are protesting, and in Alabama, we have seen protests in several cities in the state. These protests are demanding an end to institutional racism that has existed in our country and which undermines the confidence of the citizenry in our government, including our judicial system.

As judges we are bound by our oath to uphold the law and administer justice without regard to race, sex, religion, financial or any other status and to decide cases that come before us on the law and facts. As active and retired judges, we deplore and condemn racism wherever it exists.

Under the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics, judges are called on to participate and engage in activities to improve the administration of justice. Disparate treatment growing out of racial identity is unacceptable and judges have a duty to challenge and confront racism. Doing otherwise is antithetical to our promise to administer equal justice under the law.

We note the importance of having racial and gender balanced courts in our state. Judges with different backgrounds and experiences are important not only to the perception of justice and fairness but to the rendering of justice as well. We look forward to the day when Alabama's Appellate Court Judges will also reflect the total population of the state.

We are proud of our opportunity to serve our communities and our state and embrace our responsibility to root out racism and bias in our courtrooms as well as in the administration of justice. We stand strong in our commitment to provide "Equal Justice Under Law" and to challenge, confront and alleviate racial and other disparities in the Alabama legal system.

The Judicial Council of the Alabama Lawyers Association

by:

David Hobdy, Circuit Judge, President

U.W. Clemon, Retired United States District Judge

Ralph D. Cook, Retired Justice, Supreme Court of Alabama

John H. England, Jr. Circuit Judge and former Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama

Eugene Verin, Retired Circuit Judge

Johnny Hardwick, Circuit Judge, Past Chair, Judicial Council of the National Bar Association

Vanzetta Penn McPherson, Retired United States Magistrate Judge

Lynn Sherrod, Retired District Judge, Past Chair, Judicial Council of the National Bar Association

Zack Collins, District Judge