

MONROE COUNTY INITIATES OVERDUE REMEDIAL MEASURES TO ENSURE EMPLOYMENT FAIRNESS



Surveys conducted earlier this year had revealed that 10 towns with the largest populations, in Monroe County, employ 1,349 people as full time workers, but only 2.6 percent are minorities. Of the 10 towns, 3 had only one minority in their full-time employees' ranks. The 10 towns have only 35 full time minority workers. From courtroom jobs, to jury pools, judges, prosecutors and defendants and police, all are overpoweringly white. The only place in the county where you can see overwhelmingly African-American's or Latino's, are in the halls of justice as defendants and as inmates in the county's jails. Some elected officials and legal community leaders in Monroe County are initiating, welcome measures that will improve fairness in the 'local criminal justice and public safety systems,' by increasing representation of people of color. Even though African Americans and Latinos comprise nearly half of the city's population, the ratio does not reflect in the employment demographics. The number of minorities employed by sector like the fire department is appallingly low. A study ordered by New York Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, last year, found that African American representation in Monroe County's jury pool was disproportionate and uneven, reflecting a tilt in favor of the white population. There have been well-documented records, reams of them, from research over the last 30 years that indelibly prove that there is a, not misplaced, perception amongst people of colour that criminal justices and hiring practices for public safety are unfair and biased. The local bar associations, to address this anxiety, have initiated a plan to undertake a summer clerkship program for minority law students. Judge Craig Doran, who is taking the lead in efforts to correct this disproportionate imbalance in minority representation in the county's jury pool, is hosting a public meeting, along with City Court Judges Theresa Johnson and Steve Miller, on Saturday. Through the meeting, the judges hope to spread awareness of the problem and seek ideas for getting more people of color in the jury pool. That the county is committed to its cause is evident from the fact, that just recently the county amended a long standing policy that was an obstacle for people on public assistance to serve on juries. City Council President Lovely Warren's perseverance and determined focus has yielded positive results inasmuch as the pool of minority applicants to the fire department has increased from 6 to 43 percent. The Police Department shows a better proportion of minority workers in its force, as compared to the fire department, but Chief James Sheppard, is keen to make further improvements.

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