



## Supreme Court of Kentucky

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**John D. Minton, Jr.**  
Chief Justice of Kentucky

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### Black History Month Celebration Welcome by Chief Justice of Kentucky John D. Minton Jr.

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Capitol Rotunda • Frankfort, Kentucky  
February 13, 2017, 11:30 a.m. EST

Good morning, and thanks to the Black Legislative Caucus for continuing the tradition of inviting the Supreme Court to participate in this ceremony commemorating Black History Month in the Commonwealth. I am pleased the Court is once again able to host the reception for our guests on the second floor of the Capitol immediately following this event.

It recently occurred to me that the Black Legislative Caucus has graciously invited me to provide welcoming remarks at this event for the past nine years and during that time I have consistently failed to publicly acknowledge and thank Kentucky Court of Appeals Judge Denise Clayton of Louisville for the important works she does for the Kentucky Court of Justice as chair of the Jefferson County Racial Fairness Commission.

The Racial Fairness Commission was first created by Chief Justice Joseph Lambert to study and make recommendations regarding sentencing, bail, jury selection and courtroom environment in Jefferson County. The Commission's first chair was the late Justice William E. McAnulty. Judge Clayton has led the Commission since 2005.

Under Judge Clayton's leadership, the Commission has issued reports on all four of the topics originally identified by Chief Justice Lambert. These reports reflect what many of us know: there are procedures and attitudes within the court system that may demonstrate – and in some instances have demonstrated – in racial bias.

Recommendations from the Commission are now reflected in changes to the Administrative Procedures of the Kentucky Court of Justice and has been incorporated into proposed legislation. The Commission continues to work on issues of fairness within the judicial system to better inform and guide the work we do.

I am grateful to Judge Clayton for her leadership and the important work she has done and continues to do through the court system's Racial Fairness Commission. And I am pleased to report that she has agreed to spearhead the listening sessions in that I referenced during my remarks last year. We hope to hold our first session in Louisville this spring, with the intent of educating ourselves and the public on strategies to improve minority engagement with the courts and to receive feedback and comments on ways we can continue to improve the services we provide.

Equal justice under law is viewed by too many as nothing more than a slogan – an empty promise – to far too many in the communities of color in our state. The Kentucky Court of Justice needs to understand that is our problem. And we need to address it.

Thank you again for your time today and I look forward to seeing you at the reception following this event.

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