



# MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

## TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

### **EJC Community Dialogue Report**

*November 15, 2018*

---

#### **Location and Background of Attendees**

This Community Dialogue was held on November 15, 2018, at the Church of All Nations in Columbia Heights, Minnesota. There were approximately twenty members of the church and the Equal Justice Committee members present. There was an open discussion regarding equal justice. Pastor Kim did an introduction and gave a brief background on himself and his church. Each person present introduced themselves and their background. The follow include some of the discussion and themes the group discussed.

#### **Issue: Equal Justice**

- There have been so many adverse decisions made involving minorities that the legal system should take that into account and give them a bigger break, such as be bias in favor of minorities, because of the past.
- People are taught to be racist.
- There is a lack of understanding of people from other cultures. The court should involve community members from other cultures when making decisions. Community leaders can provide insight in ways not known to the judge or court staff. There should be cultural interpreters just like language interpreters
- Bias in the Courts. It is pervasive and part of a much larger problem involving majority supremacy and oppression.
- Comments on the police departments and the need to have the officers reflect the race of the community they work in.
- The justice system should take more time to know the people and not treat them like just a number.
- Need to accept people as they are and not to pass judgement because they have a different culture or context.

- Concerns of lack of minority representation in the judicial branch – both Judge and court staff.
- Discussion of racial profiling and perceived disparity of treatment of minority people.
- Train judges and staff on diversity and focus on how to inspire trust within diverse communities.
- Discussion regarding the disparate treatment in how minorities are sent to prison or jail for the same offenses that white people get a fine.
- Questions about how the public can educate themselves about judicial candidates and how to be informed voters – is there a way to profile candidates and distinguish their credentials and qualifying attributes?
- Discussion about how fines for parking and driving can really trap people in a cycle and make it difficult to ever get out.
- The majority of the issues discussed during the session were ultimately described as general systemic issues. Particularly because all court users experience the frustrations described above on some level.

## NEXT STEPS

The EJC committee just met and debriefed from this dialogue and are formulating next steps.