



Washington State Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee

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Racism and white supremacy currently plague every social, educational, economic, governmental, and legal system in our state and nation, as they have for centuries. Both target Black, Indigenous, African-American, Latin-x and other people and communities of color—resulting in entrenched inequality and inequity, manifesting in unjust, unfair and differential treatment, and yielding remarkably disparate and negative outcomes relative to those experienced by white people. Together, they have deeply wounded communities of color and deprived generations of countless opportunities, including the profound promise rooted in the founding of this country—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Additionally, both imperil and undermine the integrity, fairness, and accountability of our law and justice systems. Perversely, they have inflicted the greatest harm and the greatest individual and collective injustices to members of communities most in need of justice and rendered most vulnerable by generations of social and economic privation, and state-sanctioned oppression.

Led by the Washington State Supreme Court, many law-related entities in our state have responded to the civic discussion reignited by the killings in 2020 of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Manuel Ellis, and so many others, and the anniversaries of the deaths of Charleena Lyles, John T. Williams, and others by issuing statements acknowledging the pernicious effect of racist law and justice systems and committing to fundamental change.

The Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee (Oversight Committee) is a bipartisan body that oversees the Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA). OCLA's mission, in turn, is to meet the civil justice needs of all low-income residents of our state. Recognizing the negative impact of racism and white supremacy on our collective commitment to equity, fairness, and justice, the Oversight Committee in 2018 adopted the [Race Equity and Justice Initiative's \(REJI\) Acknowledgements and Commitments](#). In doing so, we pledged to listen, learn, and act—as individuals, as a governmental body, and in setting our expectations for and oversight of the services funded through OCLA.

Today, we embrace our state Supreme Court's June 4 [Open Letter to the Legal Community](#) and the recent [Statement](#) by our Supreme Court's Access to Justice Board; and expressly reaffirm our commitment to do the individual and institutional race equity and justice work contemplated in the Race Equity and Justice Initiative's Acknowledgments and Commitments. Racism and white supremacy must be eradicated from our society and institutions, including our justice system; and we are wholly committed to this challenging undertaking as part of our responsibility to oversee the use of public civil legal aid resources for all within our state.