

PUBLIC HEARING TRANSCRIPTS

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TRANSCRIPTS OF THE
PENNSYLVANIA SUPREME
COURT COMMITTEE ON
RACIAL AND GENDER BIAS
IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

PITTSBURGH
STATE COLLEGE
ERIE



**Erie
Public Hearing
Transcript**

COMMITTEE ON RACIAL AND GENDER BIAS IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM
PUBLIC HEARING

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Hearing held in City Council Chambers, Municipal
Building of the City of Erie, Pennsylvania on Tuesday,
April 17, 2001 beginning at 1:00 p.m. before the Supreme
Court Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice
System.

Members of the Commission:

- Nicholas P. Cafardi, Esquire, Chairman
- André Dennis, Esquire
- Burton Morris, Esquire

ORIGINAL

Members of the Subcommittee:

- Honorable Maureen Lally-Green, Judge, Pennsylvania
Superior Court
- Richard T. Ruth, Esquire
- AnnDrea Benson, Esquire
- Professor Vanessa Brown-Barbour
- Lisette M. McCormick, Esquire, Executive Director
- Jane Louik, Esquire, Associate Director

REPORTED BY: Cecelia H. Muhanna, Court Reporter

I N D E X

	SPEAKERS:	PAGE
3	Patricia Norcott	4
4	Gary Horton	5
5	Gladys Scott	24
6	Robert Wallace	36
7	Joyce Lukima	44
8	Jackie Johnson	51
9	Honorable Stephanie Domitrovich	64
10	Michael Murnock	83
11	John Petulla	96
12	Thomas Gamble	103
13	Christine Konzel	115
14	Mayor Joyce Savocchio	136
15	Robert Sambroak	146
16	Jovino Morales	160
17	Judith Kaufmann	163
18	Mary Hart	169
19	Mary Colonna	172
20	Maurice Hicks	176

21
22
23
24
25

1 many different formats the issue of the role of
2 family in crime, and have you considered that
3 in any of your statistical analysis?

4 DR. GAMBLE: We do, and I didn't -- I was
5 contacted last week so I didn't pull everything
6 together.

7 JUDGE LALLY-GREEN: It's just that it's
8 related to, it's not this subject, but I
9 wondered --

10 DR. GAMBLE: Yes, but there's no question
11 as to the effect of family influences on
12 juvenile crime. Probably the strongest
13 predictor is the quality of parental
14 supervision.

15 JUDGE LALLY-GREEN: Cutting across both
16 race and gender?

17 DR. GAMBLE: Oh, indeed, exactly the same
18 factors that lead to juvenile crime in one race
19 leads to it in the other.

20 MR. CAFARDI: Thank you very much, Dr.
21 Gamble. Thank you for your testimony today.

22 We will next hear from Christine Konzal,
23 the Public Defender in Erie County. Good
24 afternoon.

25 MS. KONZEL: Good afternoon. I'm sorry we

1 didn't have better weather for you to come up
2 to Erie.

3 MR. CAFARDI: The snow was a surprise.

4 MS. KONZEL: It was a surprise to us as
5 well. We don't usually have it as bad this
6 time of year.

7 My name is Christine Fuhrman Konzal, and I
8 am the Chief Public Defender of Erie County and
9 I had been appointed to that position back in
10 September of the year 2000 by the Erie County
11 executive. Basically I am a former graduate of
12 Duquesne Law School as well as a Penn State
13 undergrad, so is the assistant district
14 attorney behind me. He wanted to make you
15 aware that we're both Duquesne grads.

16 MR. CAFARDI: I knew there was a very high
17 quality of legal talent in Erie County.

18 MS. KONZEL: And I went to school with Ms.
19 McCormick as well.

20 MS. McCORMICK: Yes, particularly the
21 class of 1981.

22 MS. KONZEL: Right, but that tells us our
23 age, though --

24 MS. McCORMICK: We were children.

25 MS. KONZEL: Anyhow, since I've only -- I

1 know, every case, every case is different.
2 I've never had two cases the same in my life,
3 and some cases you need preliminary
4 investigation, some cases you may not, and they
5 may want to deal and they might want to know
6 what the offer is before they go to trial.
7 It's really done on an individualized basis and
8 there is really no -- we carry no hard and fast
9 policies on that.

10 MR. CAFARDI: Mr. Dennis.

11 MR. DENNIS: One final question on how the
12 office addresses the need for interpreters when
13 that need arises, and also how do you -- how
14 does the justice system meet that need
15 according to your perspective?

16 MS. KONZEL: Basically we're in charge of
17 our own -- on getting our interpreters for our
18 clients. We work pretty closely with the
19 Hispanic American Council as well as other
20 people that are on a list of court interpreters
21 in obviously the different languages that
22 they're designated to interpret for, and what
23 we do is we kind of hire them ourselves, in
24 fact, we're budgeted for that amount, actually,
25 so that we hire these interpreters and have to

1 pay them basically through our office for their
2 interpretation. Sometimes you won't know -- I
3 mean usually when the investigator talks with
4 them you find out whether they need an
5 interpreter. Some people appear at our office
6 without an interpreter and we can't really do
7 much because we can't communicate with them.
8 Unfortunately we have nobody in house that does
9 interpret, and the majority of those would be
10 Hispanic that we represent as far as
11 nationalities are concerned. But we just
12 contact the interpreters and have them come and
13 then we pay them by the hour from our own
14 budget. It's a line item of our budget.

15 MR. DENNIS: And what happens when you
16 know going into let's say a court proceeding
17 that you need an interpreter? How is that
18 handled? Does --

19 MS. KONZEL: Basically, if you don't have
20 an interpreter there, it doesn't go on. I mean
21 we just stall everything. You have to continue
22 it or try to get one, whatever, because that
23 does, every now and then it will happen that
24 someone shows up without an interpreter, and we
25 can't do it. We would never ever go ahead with

1 it if the guy needs or the woman needs an
2 interpreter, the defendant.

3 MR. CAFARDI: Any other questions? Thank
4 you very much.

5 MS. KONZEL: Thank you. I hope the sun
6 comes out for you.

7 MR. CAFARDI: We are honored to have with
8 us this afternoon the mayor of the City of
9 Erie, Mayor Joyce Savocchio. Thank you very
10 much for coming.

11 MAYOR SAVOCCHIO: Thank you. For the sake
12 of time, Mr. Chairman, I'll read my testimony.

13 MR. CAFARDI: Sure.

14 MAYOR SAVOCCHIO: I wish to welcome the
15 members of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court
16 Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the
17 Justice System to Erie for this important and
18 vital public hearing. And while I am not here
19 to give direct or experience testimony to the
20 committee, I am here to applaud your efforts to
21 insure that our justice system in the
22 Commonwealth is free of racial and gender bias.

23 Nothing speaks more directly to our rights
24 and lives as citizens than fair and equal
25 treatment of all of our citizens in our justice