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The
Barristers' Association
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An Affiliate of the National Bar Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 6, 2020

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THE BARRISTERS' ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA, INC. CONDEMNS THE RACIST COMMENTS OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT JUDGE MARK TRANQUILLI

The Barristers' Association of Philadelphia joins the Black Political Empowerment Project ("B-PEP")'s vehement condemnation of Allegheny County Common Pleas Court Judge Mark Tranquilli for his overtly racist remarks, uttered in his chambers in the presence of the prosecution and defense counsel, to describe a Black female juror following the acquittal of a Black man accused of possession with intent to deliver.

Judge Tranquilli's description of the juror as an "Aunt Jemima" because she wore a head wrap throughout the trial, in conjunction with his presumption that her vote to acquit was predicated upon her association of the defendant with her "baby daddy" who "probably sells heroin," is appalling to say the least. More concerning, Judge Tranquilli's belief that the prosecution would not obtain a conviction because this Black woman was seated highlights the concerns articulated in the Supreme Court's opinion in *Batson v. Kentucky*, which found that the State's purposeful, deliberate striking of potential black jurors violates the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution.

By his comments, Judge Tranquilli has revealed himself as categorically unable to effectively carry out the charge granted him by the public trust – the fair and equal administration of justice. Judge Tranquilli's mere presence on the bench undermines the legitimacy and perceived fairness of our court system. The Barristers' calls for a swift, thorough, and wide-ranging investigation of the complaint against Judge Tranquilli by the Judicial Conduct Board of Pennsylvania to determine if Judge Tranquilli's biases have affected the outcomes of other Black Pennsylvanians who have come before his Court.

The Barristers' applauds President Judge Berkeley Clark's swift removal of Judge Tranquilli from presiding over any cases. We also take this opportunity to publicly laud defense counsel for bringing Judge Tranquilli's private comments in chambers into the public light. The Barristers' Association trusts that all counsel, prosecutors and defense attorneys alike, and any court staff in the presence of such vile, flawed comments, will take similar action.

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