

## NEWS RELEASE

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### *Pennsylvania's First Lady to assist in implementation*

## Supreme Court accepts final report from racial and gender bias committee

**HARRISBURG, March 4, 2003** — United States Court of Appeals Judge Marjorie Rendell and Philadelphia City Solicitor Nelson Diaz will chair two Pennsylvania Supreme Court task groups to recommend the means of implementing the report of the Supreme Court's Committee on Racial and Gender Bias. Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy made that announcement today as he announced the release of the Racial and Gender Bias Committee's final report as well as the names of other task group members.

The Racial and Gender Bias Committee was created in October 1999 to determine whether — and to what extent — bias either exists or is perceived to exist in Pennsylvania's court system. The committee, chaired by Duquesne University Law School Dean Nicholas P. Cafardi, also was charged with making recommendations to the Supreme Court regarding further steps to address areas of concern.

“The report of the Committee on Racial and Gender Bias provides a great service to all of the Commonwealth's citizens in that it highlights important issues requiring careful thought and deliberation,” Chief Justice Cappy said. “Our intent is to continue to develop effective ways to address the challenges courts face, as outlined by the committee, as well as to identify both long- and short-term ways to implement those ideas across the Commonwealth.

“Personally, and on behalf of my colleagues on the Supreme Court, I am deeply appreciative of Judge Rendell's commitment, as well as that of former Judge Diaz, to lead efforts to further examine the committee's findings. As both a member of the Third Circuit bench, and now as Pennsylvania's First Lady, Judge Rendell's willingness to help lead this task only further exemplifies her dedication to the law and its equitable application. Equally so, Judge Diaz brings a similar devotion to the principles of American jurisprudence, as well as a breadth of judicial and administrative experience in relevant fields.

“Implementation of the recommendations contained in the committee's report merit active consideration,” the chief justice added. “For that purpose, I am appointing two Judicial Council of Pennsylvania task groups to review the report and recommend methods of implementing as many of the committee's suggestions as the Supreme Court finds appropriate. In part, the task groups will determine which suggestions can be implemented in the near future and those that may need further review.”

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Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Sandra Schultz Newman and Chief Justice Cappy will provide oversight for the task groups, which will be supported by staff of the Judicial Council of Pennsylvania. One task group will focus on committee recommendations regarding gender bias, while the second will be concerned with issues of ethnic and racial bias.

Members of the Gender Task Group are:

- **The Hon. Marjorie O. Rendell**, First Lady of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit
- **The Hon. Paula Francisco Ott**, Judge, Chester County Court of Common Pleas, President-elect of the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges
- **Lisa Pupo Lenihan**, Corporate Secretary/Assistant Counsel, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center; Chair, Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners; former Co-chair, Pennsylvania Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession
- **Nicholas P. Cafardi**, Dean, Duquesne School of Law, Pittsburgh; Chair, Pennsylvania Supreme Court Committee on Racial and Gender Bias
- **Timothy Carson**, Partner, Saul Ewing, LLP; Immediate Past President, Pennsylvania Bar Association, Philadelphia

Members of the Ethnic and Racial Task Group are:

- **The Hon. Nelson A. Diaz**, City Solicitor of Philadelphia; former Chief Counsel, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; former Administrative Judge, Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas
- **The Hon. Juan R. Sanchez**, Judge, Chester County Court of Common Pleas; formerly a senior attorney, Chester County Public Defender's Office
- **The Hon. Rea Boylan Thomas**, Judge, Bucks County Court of Common Pleas; former Chair, Civil Procedural Rules Committee of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania; Past Chair, Bucks County Human Relations Council
- **Lu-in Wang**, Associate Professor of Law, University of Pittsburgh School of Law; an author and recognized expert in the study of hate crimes
- **Carl Garfield Cooper**, Chief Diversity Officer, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart, LLP, Pittsburgh; former General Counsel, Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh;

Judge Sanchez and Mr. Cooper served the committee as court employment and appointment work group members, while professor Wang was a member of the work group on sentencing.

Interest in creating the Supreme Court's Committee on Racial and Gender Bias dates to 1994 when the judiciary first sought to study perceptions of bias in Pennsylvania's courts. The committee included representatives from across the state, including members of the bench and bar, educators and citizens with specific expertise. Ultimately, more than 130 Pennsylvanians were involved in committee deliberations or on voluntary committee work groups. Public hearings were held throughout Pennsylvania, including Pittsburgh, Erie, State College, Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre and Philadelphia. In releasing the report, the Chief Justice recognized committee members, committee staff, and all those who participated in the committee's work for their valuable contribution to the state's judiciary.

The complete Racial and Gender Bias Committee report, which contains about 500 pages, is available on the Pennsylvania Judiciary's Web site: [www.courts.state.pa.us](http://www.courts.state.pa.us) Limited numbers of copies, on a first come-first served basis, are also available from one of three Supreme Court Prothonotary offices in the State Capitol in Harrisburg, Philadelphia City Hall, or Pittsburgh's City-County Building.