



**JUDICIAL MISCONDUCT INVOLVING BIAS:
ETHNICITY, NATIONALITY, RACE, GENDER and SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

(Commission on Judicial Performance & Supreme Court Cases)

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Ethnicity/Nationality/Race

The judge made discourteous remarks to two participants at a hearing, including remarks that gave the appearance of bias based on national origin or ethnicity. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2022), Advisory Letter 19, p. 34.]

Judge O’Gara liked a tweet that suggested racial bias against people of Chinese descent. The tweet from the Media Research Center stated, “Liberal media pundits want you to think referring to the coronavirus as the ‘Wuhan’ or ‘Chinese’ virus is racist.” [*Public Admonishment of Judge Michael O’Gara* (2021).]

Judge Bennett told an African-American defendant to stop “shucking and jiving,” when the defendant provided what the judge believed to be evasive answers to questions the judge asked. [*Public Censure of Judge Jeffrey Bennett* (2020).]

The judge made discourteous and insensitive remarks to jurors that gave an appearance of bias based on ethnicity and national origin. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2021), Private Admonishment 1, p. 40.]

Commissioner Gianquinto posted and re-posted information on his public Facebook page that reflected, among other things, anti-Muslim sentiment, anti-immigration sentiment, and anti-Native American sentiment. [*Public Censure of Former Commissioner Joseph J. Gianquinto* (2018).]

Judge Kreep made numerous comments in the courtroom that reflected a lack of courtroom decorum and may have created an appearance of bias. The judge made comments to an attorney about her accent, whether she had Mexican citizenship, and stated, “I wasn’t planning on having you deported.” During a sidebar conference for a prostitution case, Judge Kreep used the words “Chinese prostitutes,” then turned to a deputy city attorney (DCA) and said, “No offense to Chinese people,” in the presence of one of the DCA’s supervisors, a City Attorney’s Office intern and a deputy public defender. The DCA testified she was

bothered by the “[n]o offense to Chinese people” comment because Judge Kreep constantly mentioned her ethnicity. By way of example, she mentioned a time when Judge Kreep introduced visitors from Korea. Judge Kreep told the visitors the DCA was from China and spoke Mandarin. The DCA is not from China. In another matter, Judge Kreep injected race into the conversation about prizes for Halloween costume contest winners, without any prompting or suggestion. After a Halloween costume contest at the court, Judge Kreep was alleged to have said to an African-American court employee, who had participated in the contest, that he did not want anyone to say, “I didn’t win due to race.” The comment suggested unfairly that the employee might question the results of the contest based on her race. The judge used crude language, joking in open court about the accent of his Filipino school teacher who always asked for “a shit of paper.” On multiple occasions, the judge addressed individuals with Hispanic surnames in Spanish, failing to recognize that speaking Spanish to people based on his perception that they were Hispanic could be perceived as offensive or suggest differential treatment; assumptions “that a person with a Latino/Hispanic surname speaks Spanish can suggest stereotyping based on race, national origin, or ethnicity.” [*Inquiry Concerning Judge Gary G. Kreep* (2017) 3 Cal.5th CJP Supp. 1]

Shortly after the petitioner began testifying at a hearing on a petition for a restraining order, Judge Pollard asked to address the respondent and asked him where he was born, eliciting the response that he was born in California. The judge then said that she was “concerned about the throwing of rocks and the spitting,” and stated, “Usually that is the kind of behavior I see in Middle Eastern clients....” The judge added, “[I]f the declaration says, ‘He drags me around the house by the hair,’ it’s almost always a Hispanic client.” [*Public Admonishment of Judge Nancy Pollard* (2011).]

The judge was discussing the prospects of settlement with counsel off the record in open court in a criminal case involving African-American defendants. The defendants were in the holding cell; family members of one of the defendants were in the audience. The judge remarked that he guessed that the only thing that would make the defendants plead was for him to come out in a white sheet and pointy hat, which he indicated that he would not do. [*Public Admonishment of Judge Harvey Giss* (2011).]

A judge used the court computer to forward to judicial officers a satirical email that promoted negative stereotypes about people from a certain country, apparently realizing that it would be offensive to at least one judge whose ancestors were from that country. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2008), Advisory Letter 6, p. 26.]

A judge's remarks in a public setting appeared to reflect negative racial and ethnic stereotypes. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2007), Advisory Letter 12, p. 32.]

The judge was disciplined for comments to litigants in two cases. In one, the judge made remarks reflecting bias. The judge referred to the defendant having transferred ownership of a restaurant to his wife who, the judge stated was "probably a very nice lady, probably doesn't know how much she owns, I don't think" and that "in her native Syria (?) probably wouldn't be allowed to own property." [*Public Admonishment of Judge James M. Brooks* (2006).]

A judge's email to other judges gave the appearance of ethnic bias in the discharge of administrative responsibilities. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2006), Private Admonishment 5, p. 31.]

After a trial resulting in the defendant's conviction, Judge Van Voorhis gave unsolicited advice to defense counsel who was still at counsel table with his client filling out forms. The judge's advice included telling the attorney, who was born in Ecuador, to "lose the accent." This conduct resulted in Judge Van Voorhis's removal from office. [*Inquiry Concerning Judge Bruce Van Voorhis* (2003) 48 Cal.4th CJP Supp. 257.]

In addition to other misconduct, in two separate civil matters, the judge made remarks during court proceedings that disparaged the litigants and counsel. Some remarks appeared to advocate one side of the case, and some remarks appeared to reflect bias against a particular class; some of the remarks had been made in the presence of the jury. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2001), Private Admonishment 3, p. 19.]

In questioning prospective jurors about their attitudes concerning race in a criminal trial, a judge repeatedly used a racial epithet and negative stereotypes in reference to the defendant's race, with the defendant's apparent consent. The commission urged the use of other means to accomplish the judge's stated purpose of ferreting out attitudes of racial bias. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1999), Advisory Letter 6, p. 22.]

During a chambers proceeding in a civil case, a judge referred to the case by the national origin of the litigants and made other comments which appeared to disparage persons from that nation. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1999), Advisory Letter 14, p. 23.]

A judge made remarks during a court proceeding that gave the appearance of bias against a litigant based on the litigant's country of origin. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1998), Advisory Letter 32, p. 28.]

In addition to other misconduct, after a defendant became physically disruptive and had to be restrained, the judge said that the defendant did not have a "Chinaman's chance" of reaching him. There was additional misconduct. [*Public Admonishment of Judge James L. Stevens* (1998).]

Judge Gordon was censured for conduct that included referring to his court clerk as the "little Mexican" or "peon" and to a court reporter, a person of Japanese ancestry, as "little Buddha head." [*In re Norman W. Gordon* (1996) 13 Cal.4th 472.]

Judge Flier referred to an African-American defendant before him as "good boy" in open court. [*Public Reproval of Judge Richard S. Flier* (1995).]

During argument by an attorney of Japanese-American ancestry, Judge Haugner interrupted and said, "No, no listen. You filed your papers.... Do you have something to add to those papers which isn't in there, some brilliant case you found somewhere in the Upper Tokyo reports or somewhere that nobody knows about, tell me about it. Otherwise there's no need to argue over what you already have." [*Public Reproval of Judge Richard A. Haugner* (1994).]

A judge made a joke about a defendant that could reasonably have been construed as racist. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1993), Advisory Letter 13, p. 18.]

A judge made rude remarks that suggested bias against a certain ethnic group. For instance, with no basis other than a defendant's ethnicity, the judge said the defendant was probably not legally in the United States. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1992), Advisory Letter 30, p. 16.]

In addition to other misconduct, a judge twice made remarks which could reasonably be construed as racist. In communications with the commission the judge recognized the problems, promised reform, and agreed to attend a program on fairness sponsored by the California Center for Judicial Education and Research. The judge was relatively inexperienced. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1991), Private Admonishment C, pp. 9-10.]

A criminal defendant was born in a certain country. The judge told the defendant that persons of his nationality "have a horrible reputation in this country," and

made other racist remarks. The judge enjoyed an otherwise high reputation from all segments of the bar. The incident was apparently isolated. In dealings with the commission the judge recognized the impropriety of the remarks, expressed remorse, and promised to apologize to the defendant. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1991), Advisory Letter 3, p. 11.]

In dealing with a non-English-speaking defendant and with the defendant's proposed interpreter, a judge gave the impression of impatience and discourtesy. The commission reminded the judge that a patient tone is particularly important with non-English-speaking parties and witnesses. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1988), Advisory Letter 3, p. 11.]

Addressing an obstreperous traffic court defendant, a judge made a remark which appeared to denigrate the defendant's national origin. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1988), Advisory Letter 13, p. 12.]

Judge Gonzalez was removed from office for misconduct including, in a colleague's chambers, responding to news that a black deputy district attorney's wife had had a miscarriage by stating, in essence, "Oh good, one less minority." At a Christmas party, the judge asked a female Jewish deputy district attorney whether "with all the inbreeding your people do, aren't you afraid that they will produce a race of idiots?" or words to that effect. On pronouncing judgment on a male of Mexican extraction on a charge of beating his wife, the judge stated that although such behavior might be tolerated in Africa or Mexico, it would not be tolerated in America. During voir dire in a criminal case, he questioned a Japanese venireman about inflation and then commented that he did not know why he was speaking to a Japanese juror about inflation, because "what do fishheads and rice cost?" During another jury voir dire in a criminal case, the judge asked a black woman on the panel who had said that she worked as a grocery clerk if she knew the price of watermelon. [*Gonzalez v. Commission on Judicial Performance* (1983) 33 Cal.3d 359.]

Judge Stevens was censured for repeatedly and persistently using racial and ethnic epithets, and making racially stereotypical remarks to counsel and court personnel. In a civil settlement conference, the judge referred to attorney Alejandro Gonzales as "acting like a Mexican jumping bean" after he changed his position on settlement. In connection with a child abuse proceeding involving a Hispanic defendant with a Spanish surname, the judge observed from his prior experience that (in effect) Spanish persons live by different standards than we do; that wife abuse is common and more acceptable for them; and that such abuse might explain defendant's conduct toward her child. He also used terms

such as “cute little tamales,” “Taco Bell,” “spic,” and “bean” when referring to persons with Hispanic surnames in conversations with court personnel.

During an in-chambers discussion regarding a criminal case involving two black defendants and a white victim, Judge Stevens remarked to counsel that black persons have to learn to live in their own neighborhoods and that it was “typical” of black persons to fight unfairly. The judge also referred to black persons as “Jig, dark boy, colored boy, nigger, coon, Amos and Andy, and jungle bunny.” With one exception, the judge did not use these terms in open court or with reference to a party, witness or attorney in a case before him. In a probate case involving a controversy between black litigants regarding burial of a loved one, the judge stated in the presence of court personnel only, “let’s get on with this Amos and Andy show.” On another occasion, he privately referred to his court clerk as being “lazier than a coon.”

During another in-chambers discussion, Judge Stevens stated to a public defender that “Filipinos can be good, hard-working people and that they are clean, unlike some black animals who come into contact with the court.” [*In re Charles S. Stevens* (1982) 31 Cal.3d 403.]

Judge Chargin was censured for remarks made in a juvenile delinquency proceeding. The judge’s remarks included, “Mexican people, after age 13 years of age, it’s perfectly alright to go out and act like an animal. [¶] ... [¶] Maybe Hitler was right.” [*In re Gerald S. Chargin* (1970) 2 Cal.3d 617.]

Gender

The commission found that several tweets that Judge O’Gara liked on Twitter appeared to convey bias against victims of sexual assault and disdain and disrespect for women. One of those tweets stated, “#FreeLouieCK.” The judge also liked a tweet that responded to a tweet about then-Judge Brett Kavanaugh making a “partisan attack” during hearings on his nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court by stating, “How many nominations have you handled where the nominee was expected to remain calm when asked about the rape gangs he didn’t organize?” The judge also liked a tweet by actor James Woods in response to a tweet from Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Ocasio-Cortez’s tweet stated: “Is anyone archiving these Trump sycophants for when they try to downplay or deny their complicity in the future? I foresee [a] decent probability of many deleted Tweets, writings, photos in the future.” Woods’ response stated: “Are you literally making lists? I understand you’re an ignorant nitwit who’s never had a passing acquaintance with a history book, but political lists are EXACTLY what Communists do: Lenin, Stalin, Pol Pot, Castro. So put me at the top of your

list, you moron. I'd be honored." [*Public Admonishment of Judge Michael J. O'Gara (2021).*]

The commission concluded that Judge Stafford had engaged in serious misconduct by making comments that were extremely undignified and inappropriate, belittling and injurious, and based on gender-based stereotypes, raising the appearance of gender bias. Judge Stafford presided over a hearing on a woman's petition for a civil harassment restraining order against a co-worker. During the hearing, the petitioner acknowledged that, earlier in their relationship, when the two were friends, she told the respondent about a text message that she had sent to her husband saying, "Will you buy me a new car if I give you a blow job every day?" At the conclusion of the hearing, Judge Stafford remarked, "I feel like I've sat for the last four and a half or five hours dealing with junior high school students, both of you, even though you have some gray over your ears, all right." Judge Stafford further stated to the petitioner, "[A]nd it was like [the respondent] was pretty much the big man on campus, had the bucks in his back pocket, and the petitioner was the best looking girl in school, and he was going to get her any way he possibly could, all right. And she knew it, and she liked it, because she got things." He went on: "And don't — counsel, you're giving me a frown. Look it. If I got a letter from someone, or a phone call saying, I'll give you a blow job every day for the rest of your life for a car, we will be at the Mercedes dealer pretty soon, but not because I'm married, all right." When the petitioner's lawyer interjected that the particular text message to which the judge had alluded had not been directed at the respondent, but to the petitioner's own husband, Judge Stafford said he understood to whom it was directed and added, "It came out of your client's mouth, out of her brain onto a piece of paper, didn't it?" After making these remarks, Judge Stafford denied the petition for a restraining order, and the petitioner appealed. The Fourth District Court of Appeal reversed Judge Stafford's ruling and found that the judge had abused his discretion in denying the request for a restraining order. The Court of Appeal stated that Judge Stafford's comments did not accord with recognized principles of judicial decorum consistent with the presentation of a case in an atmosphere of fairness and impartiality. [*Public Admonishment of Judge Timothy J. Stafford (2018).*]

Judge Johnson was disciplined for remarks he made while sentencing a defendant convicted of rape and other sexual assault offenses against a woman with whom he had previously been in a relationship. In explaining why he was imposing a six-year sentence, despite the prosecution's request for a 16-year sentence, the judge referred to his past experience as a prosecutor in the sexual assault unit, and said that he had seen women who had been "ravaged and savaged" and whose vaginas had been "shredded by the rape." He continued:

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I'm not a gynecologist, but I can tell you something: If someone doesn't want to have sexual intercourse, the body shuts down. The body will not permit that to happen unless a lot of damage is inflicted, and we heard nothing about that in this case. That tells me that the victim in this case, although she wasn't necessarily willing, she didn't put up a fight. And to treat this case like the rape cases that we all hear about is an insult to victims of rape. I think it's an insult. I think it trivializes a rape.

Later, when the prosecutor inquired why the court was not viewing the fact that threats and a weapon were involved as aggravating factors, Judge Johnson responded, "I just found the threats to be technical threats. I found this whole case to be a technical case. The rape is technical. The forced oral copulation is technical. It's more of a crim law test than a real live criminal case." [*Public Admonishment of Judge Derek G. Johnson* (2012).]

In addition to other misconduct, a judge used sexist and demeaning terms and gestures to female court staff. The judge sent an inappropriate flirtatious email to another female court employee. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2011), Private Admonishment 2, p. 23.]

A female attorney representing a criminal defendant before Judge Fletcher did not appear at a scheduled hearing. After an unrecorded telephone conference with her office, the judge stated in open court: "She shouldn't be handling criminal cases. [¶] Here's another example of a civil attorney who shouldn't be handling criminal cases." He then commented that she "probably had something more important to do today, like go to a PTA meeting." He continued: "She has a whole bunch of kids. She's been having kids ever since I've known her." The Supreme Court adopted the commission's findings that the judge's statements were inappropriate and could be deemed prejudicial misconduct, citing *Kennick v. Commission on Judicial Performance* (1990) 50 Cal.3d 297 for finding "unprofessional, demeaning and sexist remarks" to be prejudicial misconduct. This conduct resulted in Judge Fletcher's removal from office. [*Fletcher v. Commission on Judicial Performance* (1998) 19 Cal.4th 865.]

A judge engaged in displays of affection toward court employees which were unwelcome to some. In mitigation, the judge attended training in appropriate workplace conduct. The judge also made a comment to an attorney appearing before the judge which reflected gender bias. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1998), Advisory Letter 38, p. 29.]

Judge Gordon was censured for conduct involving on several occasions making sexually suggestive remarks to and asking explicit questions of female staff

members, referring to staff members using crude and demeaning names and descriptions, referring to a fellow jurist's physical attributes in a demeaning manner, and mailing a sexually suggestive postcard to a staff member addressed to her at the courthouse. The actions were determined to be conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judiciary into disrepute. [*In re Norman W. Gordon* (1996) 13 Cal.4th 472.]

In addition to other misconduct, a judge made comments during trial which may have fostered an impression of gender bias. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1996), Advisory Letter 18, p. 25.]

On several occasions, a judge's remarks to women attorneys needlessly intruded upon personal matters which created an unwelcome sexual atmosphere in the courthouse. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1994), Private Admonishment 3, p. 17.]

A judge tacitly permitted an attorney to make vulgar, offensive, gender-biased remarks during a chambers hearing. The remarks were also insensitive to minors. This fostered the appearance that the judge approved of the remarks. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1992), Advisory Letter 18, p. 15.]

A judge made comments to the press which gave the appearance of gender bias. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1992), Advisory Letter 31, p. 16.]

In addition to other misconduct, Judge Kennick was removed from office for referring to women attorneys as "sweetheart," "sweetie," or "baby." [*Kennick v. Commission on Judicial Performance* (1990) 50 Cal.3d 297.]

During a settlement conference, a judge made rude, impatient, and sexist remarks to parties and counsel; the judge made unwarranted threats to counsel and a party; the judge met with parties without counsel's presence or consent; the judge denounced counsel in open court and to the parties. The admonishment was severe. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1990), Private Admonishment B, p. 19.]

A judge made sexist remarks in a family law matter. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1989), Advisory Letter 3, p. 22.]

A judge made sexist statements at a dinner speech. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1989), Advisory Letter 29, p. 25.]

A judge kept a sexist picture on the bench and appeared to observers to join courtroom staff in offensive, sexist conversations. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1989), Advisory Letter 34, p. 25.]

At a time when five to six men were in Judge Geiler's chambers, the judge's court clerk entered the judge's chambers at his request. Shortly thereafter, she left. As she was leaving, Judge Geiler commented, "How would you like to eat that?" referring to his clerk. The judge occasionally asked the clerk, "Did you get any last night?" This conduct resulted in Judge Geiler's removal from office. [*Geiler v. Commission on Judicial Qualifications* (1973) 10 Cal.3d 270.]

Sexual Orientation

In addition to other misconduct, Judge Bailey made improper remarks reflecting stereotypes based on sexual orientation. In conversation with two other judges and an administrative analyst in an open office area at the court's administration building, Judge Bailey responded to a compliment on his outfit by saying it was put together by a gay salesperson in France, and the judge knew it looked good because gay men are "snappy" dressers. Though the tone of the conversation was light-hearted, two of the judge's colleagues were offended. [*Inquiry Concerning Former Judge Steven C. Bailey* (2019) 6 Cal.5th CJP Supp. 24.]

Commissioner Gianquinto posted and re-posted information on his public Facebook page that reflected, among other things, anti-same-sex marriage sentiment. [*Public Censure of Former Commissioner Joseph J. Gianquinto* (2018).]

A judge's remarks about sexual orientation may have created the appearance of bias. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1999), Advisory Letter 16, p. 23.]

After transferring a juvenile court case to another judge, the judge chastised the minor's parent in open court, stating that the parent had caused the minor's misbehavior. The minor was present. The remarks appeared directed to the parent's sexual orientation and were gratuitous. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (1992), Advisory Letter 19, p. 15.]

Additional/Other/Type of Bias Not Specified

The judge improperly injected the judge's personal experience into a proceeding, giving the appearance of bias toward a protected class. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2022), Advisory Letter 20, p. 34.]

Judge O’Gara liked a tweet on Twitter by James Woods that “appeared to convey an anti-Muslim sentiment and gave the appearance of criticizing the First Amendment right to protest exercised by participants in the Women’s March.” Woods’ January 2017 tweet showed a picture of women in burqas and chains and stated, “These are the #women we should be fighting for. This @womensmarch is an abomination.” [*Public Admonishment of Judge Michael O’Gara* (2021).]

The judge engaged in conduct that created an appearance of impropriety and religious bias. The judge’s misconduct was mitigated by extensive attempts to correct the judge’s actions. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2021), Private Admonishment 2, p. 40.]

During different hearings in a matter, the judge made comments that were undignified and discourteous, and made other comments that would reasonably be perceived as reflecting bias and prejudice toward a particular class. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2018), Private Admonishment 8, p. 28.]

During a hearing, the judge made comments that reflected bias toward a particular class. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2018), Advisory Letter 2, p. 28.]

The judge denied a criminal defendant’s own-recognizance release for improper reasons, including a reason that reflected bias toward a particular class. [Com. on Jud. Performance, Ann. Rept. (2018), Advisory Letter 23, p. 29.]

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