

## LINA'S THREE MINUTE PRESENTATION TO BLC PUBLIC HEARING 1/29/08

Good afternoon. My name is Lina Lorenzi and I am here to share my experience of discrimination within the Judicial Branch.

I was born and raised in East Harlem and I am Puerto Rican. I am a graduate of Fordham University, I have a law degree from NYU Law School and am admitted to practice law in the State of Connecticut. On August 11, 2006, I was terminated from my position as Program Manager in Jury Administration by the Jury Administrator of the Judicial Branch. At the time I was the highest ranking and only Latina in a management position in Court Operations. My termination came after almost ten years of service. This termination was the culmination of a year and a half of a continuing course of bullying, demeaning and unprofessional speech and conduct directed at me by the Jury Administrator when she learned that I might be in the running for a top position which would make me her boss and retaliation by the Jury Administrator for my complaints to her superiors regarding her prejudicial treatment of me. Retaliation came in the form of dissemination of misinformation of my work to superiors, unsatisfactory work evaluations, repeated extensions of my probationary period and loss of an annual raise. Unsatisfactory performance appraisals did not mention the accomplishments of the Jury Outreach Program of which I was the manager or my work in managing the program but instead were digressions about violations of unwritten rules such as eating a fish sandwich at my desk. Complaints to Court Operations managers were met with statements like, "you have to know your place", "this meeting never happened", "don't give me that Latino shit", and "it's not how good your work is but how you get along with your supervisor". With the full knowledge and consent of top Court Operations managers I was subjected to such a hostile work environment that I was forced to take a medical leave for treatment of nervous exhaustion and collapse in February 2006.

While I was out on medical leave that lasted from February until July 2006 I filed a formal complaint against the Judicial Branch and the Jury Administrator with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. My complaint passed a Merit Review Assessment and four full day fact finding hearings were held in April and May 2007. Before going to the CHRO I had the option to file a complaint about my discriminatory treatment at the hands of the Jury Administrator with the Affirmative Action Officer of the Judicial Branch. I did not file a complaint with the Affirmative Action Office of the Judicial Branch because of the experience I had when I made a complaint on the advise of a Court Operations official against a Judicial Branch Marshal.

Prior to being promoted to Program Manager in Jury Administration in November 2004 I was the Deputy Chief Clerk for Hartford Superior Court for Juvenile Matters. In June 2004 I reported to my supervisor and the Judicial Branch's Affirmative Action Officer that several court personnel had come to my office to report racially inappropriate remarks being made by a Marshal in our court. I knew this to be the case as the same Marshal had made racial remarks in my office. These remarks included but were not limited to "The people who come into this court are cockroaches.", "There is too much Spanish spoken in this building. What are you going to do about it before I have to take it higher?" The Affirmative Action Officer informed me that an investigation would take place. Much to my horror the investigation cleared the Marshal who was subsequently promoted and transferred to another court. I, who initially got tremendous support from my supervisor for my work in the juvenile court was then written up for the inability to keep up with huge amounts of new paperwork that only I could do in addition to running the largest juvenile court in the state. This happened despite repeated requests for

relief. This reprimand came three months after I submitted the complaint against the Marshal for his many racial slurs in the court and to court personnel. This experience was an absolute deterrent to filing any future complaints with the Affirmative Action Officer in the Judicial Branch.

Much has been lately about concerns regarding secrecy and the judiciary in this state. A major component of the Judicial Branch is the administrative section of the Branch with its many administrators and managers ~~with secrets of their own~~. There are 4,000 employees in the Judicial Branch. Many of these employees are members of minority groups. Complaints of racial discrimination within the Judicial Branch are kept within the confines of the Branch. The policies around these complaints are approved and sanctioned by the State Supreme Court.

It has been seventeen months since my termination. I still see a therapist regularly and take medication for treatment of post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression. The Judicial Branch administrators who did this to me are still in their positions; one even was been made a Magistrate by the previous Chief Court Administrator. The number of minority administrators in the Judicial Branch remains low while the discriminatory treatment of minorities who are afraid to come forward remains disproportionately high. I implore the Black and Latino Caucus to use your powers to stop the type of abuse that I have been made to endure. Thank you.

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