

For Immediate Release

REMARKS TO INTRODUCE THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER FOR THE 2006 DIVERSITY RECEPTION — FORMER MAYOR DAVID DINKINS

SPEECH GIVEN BY MICHAEL A. CARDOZO TO GUESTS AT THE NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT'S ANNUAL DIVERSITY RECEPTION AT THE NEW YORK COUNTY LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ON OCTOBER 30, 2006

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Before I introduce our speaker for this diversity reception, I want to say a few words about the importance of both public service and diversity.

First, public service. Mayor Koch has frequently said that "public service, honestly done, is the most noble of all professions." I would add, and I hope, by the end of the panel presentation tonight you will understand why I say this, that when you are an attorney practicing in the public service arena you are most especially engaged in the most noble of all professions.

Second, diversity and its importance to the New York City Law Department. When you ask some people why diversity is so important to business today, many will answer it is important because the law requires that a company, and a law firm, and certainly a public law firm like the New York City Law Department, be diverse. The law prohibits discrimination they will say.

Others will say it important to have a diverse work force because it is the right thing to do.

Of course the law does prohibit discrimination, it does require diversity, and having a diverse work force is the right thing to do.

But diversity is important to the New York City Law Department for reasons far beyond just complying with the law or doing the right thing. Having a diverse work force makes this office a much better law firm; a better place to work, and enables us to serve our clients far more effectively than if we were not composed of such a diverse group of attorneys.

Let me explain what I mean. In New York City,

- 25% are African-American,
- 27% are Hispanic,
- 10% are Asian, and
- 60% of the work force are ethnic minorities.

Think of the implications these numbers have on what lawyers representing New York City do.

When our family court lawyers prosecute a juvenile delinquent, the likelihood is great that either the victim of the alleged crime, and/or the accused juvenile is a minority.

When the lawyers in our labor division are defending the city in a discrimination suit, it is more than likely that many of the participants in the suit — plaintiff, witnesses, defendants — will be minorities.

When our tort lawyers appear before New York City juries those juries will obviously be composed of many, many minorities.

In each of those cases we work with a diverse public, and a diverse city work force. With a diverse attorney base, we more effectively represent our client — New York City. We can bring different perspectives to a legal problem that a diverse work force allows us to have. In short, diversity makes us a better and stronger law firm, and a very exciting place to work.

While we certainly have not always been as diverse as we are now, I should mention that the very first female African-American attorney this office ever had, Jane Bolin, in 1939 became the first African-American woman judge in the United States.

So, what does the Law Department do about diversity?

We count it among one of our highest values. We want to make sure that people of all colors, and all ethnicities, and all backgrounds are encouraged to become members of the department, and once in the Department, feel welcome. We do everything possible to recruit a diverse work force.

For example, we have a Diversity Committee, that is hosting this reception tonight and sponsors other receptions as well which highlight diversity issues. That committee deals with diversity issues and makes suggestions as to how we can make the office even more diverse. Where appropriate, the committee offers critiques of what we do.

In addition, we constantly strive both to attract a diverse work force, and be sure they are welcome here. In fact, we recently completed a survey of all attorneys in the office and asked every lawyer how we could do better in the diversity area.

And what has been the result of our diversity efforts?

- 5 of our 17 divisions are led by Black, Hispanic or openly gay or lesbian attorneys
- Over half of our 17 divisions are led by women
- 37 attorneys in the office self-identify as gay or lesbian
- 10 attorneys in the office self-identify as disabled
- 30% of our junior attorneys (graduating between 1997 and 2005) are Black, Hispanic or Asian
- The class of 2006 that just joined us is 39% ethnically diverse
- Our summer program was 35% diverse
- We have a higher percentage of minority attorneys in this office than all but X of the 100 largest New York City law firms

But we can do better, and must do better.

I hope that after you hear tonight's program, and learn about the excitement of working here, that you will apply for a job with us.

We could have no better person to speak to us tonight at this diversity reception than Mayor David Dinkins. His career exemplifies the values and the importance of everything I have just been talking about.

Mayor Dinkins is a graduate of Howard University and Brooklyn Law School. He was a United States Marine. He was a lawyer in private practice.

But it was in his public service career that he led this City in recognizing the importance of diversity. Before becoming Mayor, he was a State Assemblyman, President of the Board of Elections, New York City Clerk, and Manhattan Borough President.

Mayor Dinkins was a founding member of the Black & Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus, the Council of Black Elected Democrats of New York State, and a Vice President of the United States Conference of Mayors. Today he is a professor of public affairs at Columbia University which has named a professorship in his honor. At the same time, he is an avid and (I have it on very good authority) outstanding, tennis player.

Most importantly, he is devoted not only to his family, but to this city. He is also a great friend and supporter of this office.

Ladies and gentlemen it is my honor and pleasure to introduce to you the 106th Mayor of the City of New York, David Dinkins.

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