

PERSPECTIVE; News

New York Law Journal

November 14, 2005 Monday

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New York Law Journal

Section: Pg. 4, (col. 4); Vol. 234

Length: 345 words

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Body

News

Justice's 'Gorgeous Mosaic'

The following remarks were delivered by state Supreme Court Justice Rolando Acosta during a recent meeting of the Association of Judges of Hispanic Heritage.

As I celebrate my first Hispanic Heritage dinner as president of the association, I want to take a minute both to reaffirm this association's long tradition of struggle for judicial diversity, and to make it relevant to the effective delivery of justice.

We constantly talk about the need for diversity, but hardly ever about the underlying reasons for, or the goals of, a diverse judiciary--how a diverse judiciary results directly in equality, an important and legitimate end in and of itself. We hardly ever talk about the fact that judicial diversity brings a variety of experiences and views to the bench, which I believe trickles down to the factual decisions that we make and ultimately to the quality of justice that we dispense.

But as important as these goals of diversity are, I believe that the most important goal of diversity, once it is fully achieved, is to give credibility to a judicial system that Latinos and People of Color have historically viewed with suspicion and distrust. A diverse judiciary engenders confidence that courts--the last bastion of justice--have the requisite moral authority to dispense justice to all.

The future shines bright. While last week many focused on some of the negativity that passes for news, I saw that three of the six decisions published in the Law Journal were written by Latino judges. Indeed, when I saw the Appellate Division, First Department decisions, some written by our only Latino in that court, I also noticed that many of the decisions affirmed were of Latino trial judges. All of this to say that my focus on diversity always takes place in the context of the excellence, yes, the excess of superb legal talent that exists in our community.

The luster will be restored as the public--our gorgeous mosaic, to quote David Dinkins--looks at the mirror of justice and sees itself in it. It sees that justice is all of us.

Load-Date: August 7, 2011