



MARTINET
GREATER NEW ORLEANS CHAPTER

Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society's Statement
Condemning Judge Michelle Odinet's Racist Remarks

The Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society ("Martinet") condemns the racist and derogatory remarks of current City Court of Lafayette, Louisiana judge, Michelle Odinet. Judge Odinet was recently identified in a video recording saying the "n-word" and comparing an African American man to a roach. Judge Odinet's remarks are unacceptable and stem from a deep-rooted history of systemic racism and hatred of African Americans in this country. Her remarks must not be tolerated.

The "n-word" has a harmful and hurtful history in the African American community. During Slavery and the Jim-Crow era, white southern political leaders, segregationists, and even average-day citizens used this word to demean and marginalize African Americans, solely because of the color of their skin. However, despite its history—and as evidenced by Judge Odinet's comments—this harmful practice still continues today. Nevertheless, it is reprehensible for a member of the judiciary, who is charged with the responsibility of upholding the law in an impartial way, to refer to an African American man as the "n-word" and "roach" and do so with such ease and amusement.

Our judicial system is tasked with two important objectives: (1) protecting its citizens (regardless of race); and (2) interpreting and applying the law in an impartial way. However, as a result of Jim Crow-era practices and systemic racism, our judicial system has historically provided disparate and inequitable treatment to African Americans, which has caused a distrust of the judicial system within the African American community. Members of the judiciary are held in high esteem in the legal community and are tasked with reviewing the facts in every case and applying the law in an impartial manner. This task, when properly executed, upholds the integrity and validity of our legal system. However, Judge Odinet's recent remarks not only call into question her impartiality in cases involving African American litigants and attorneys who have appeared in her courtroom, but also her ability to administer justice and protect the citizens of this State.

Two of the founding principles of Martinet are to (1) encourage the interchange of ideas and (2) promote the administration of justice. With these ideals in mind, we must act boldly and challenge racism in the legal profession head on. In doing so, we must hold those individuals charged with the responsibility of interpreting the law in an impartial manner accountable for any racist behavior or statements made, both inside and outside of the court. Martinet urges the Judiciary Commission of Louisiana to fully investigate this matter and hold Judge Odinet

accountable for her actions. Martinet also encourages the community and its members to dedicate time and resources to combating systemic racism and holding ourselves, our colleagues, and our elected officials accountable for our actions and for promoting a more just and humane society, free from racism and prejudice.

ABOUT THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS MARTINET LEGAL SOCIETY

The objective of the Louis A. Martinet Society is to encourage the interchange of ideas, promote legal scholarship, advance the science of jurisprudence, promote the administration of justice, uphold the order and ethics of the courts and the profession of law, and promote the welfare of the legal profession in Louisiana. The Louis A. Martinet Society was founded in 1957 by—Earl J. Amedee; Israel M. Augustine; Louis Berry; Lionel Collins; Robert F. Collins; Niles R. Douglas; Norman C. Francis; Benjamin J. Johnson; Alvin Jones; Vanue B. LaCour; Ernest N. Morial; Justice Revius Ortique, Jr.; J. T. Powell; James Smith; A. P. Tureaud; Freddie Warren and Lawrence Wheeler. These African American lawyers committed themselves, just as Martinet Society members do today, to combating racial injustices and inequalities in and outside of Louisiana’s courtrooms. The Martinet Society has chapters throughout the state of Louisiana.