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Newsroom: Seeking a Balance: Judicial Diversity in RI 7/7/2016

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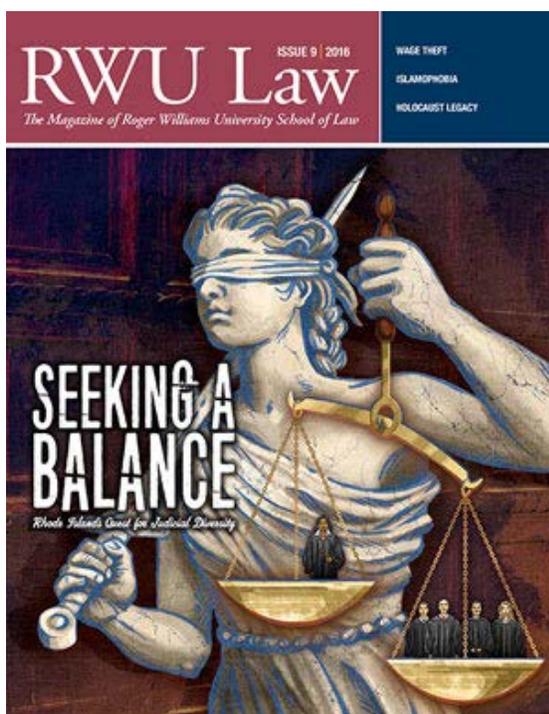
Newsroom

July 7, 2016

Seeking a Balance: Judicial Diversity in RI

Cultivating a more racially and ethnically diverse judiciary has long been acknowledged as the right thing to do – so why is the Rhode Island bench still so white?

From RWU Law Magazine: "[Seeking a Balance](#)" by Michael M. Bowden



Should Rhode Island's racial and ethnic diversity be reflected in the makeup of its judiciary?

Almost everyone agrees that it should.

Diversity on the state's bench, advocates say, is both a symbolic and a practical ideal – as essential to fairness and justice (and perhaps as importantly, the public perception of fairness and justice) as a police force that reflects the diversity of the neighborhoods it serves. After all, they argue, a judiciary that “looks like Rhode Island” would clearly signal that the courts are fully in tune with all who come before them; that everyone will be understood and get a fair hearing.

Yet Rhode Island's courts remain just as homogenously white as they were 20 years ago: out of 54 state judges (not counting magistrates), only three are individuals of color. Slowly but surely, more blacks, Latinos and other people of color are entering the "pipeline" of lawyers from whom future judges will be drawn. But what can be done in the interim? And what's at stake?

A lot, experts say...