

June 16, 2014

Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General of the United States
Department of Justice
900 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D. C., 20530-00001

Dear Esteemed Attorney General Eric Holder:

We write to direct your attention to a deplorable and significant instances of racial discrimination in the Washington State Department of Corrections. Many employees despite their qualifications and experience are being denied jobs and access to promotional opportunities. Moreover, positions of relative significance at the executive level and otherwise are often filled through direct appointment practices. Consequently, individuals are hand selected and appointed without being required to go through formal interview processes. As a result of this practice and others, qualified employees are not even given the chance to compete for positions for which they qualify and would likely excel in if given the opportunity.

A culture of institutional racism has become systemic and experienced at all levels in this state agency. As attachments to this letter demonstrate, though African Americans and Latinos (Hispanics) are proportionately over-represented in the offender population in the State of Washington, they are in effect all but excluded from the principal Administrative Office of the Corrections system, and are completely unrepresented in the highest level. In a prison system with a proportionately overwhelming population of color, and excluding the Governor, the top Administrative positions are White except for Mr. Dan Pacholke, Assistant Secretary of the Prison Division, who is of Asian and White ancestry. Underneath Mr. Pacholke is the single African American in the entire administrative level of the Department of Corrections: Mr. Earl Wright, Deputy Director of Command B in the Prison Division. The only other person of color in the entire administrative offices of the Washington State Department of Corrections is Mr. Eric Hernandez, Acting Director of Command B in the Health Services Division.

Other than as indicated in the attachments and the paragraph that precedes this sentence, the entire apparatus of the Washington State Corrections Department Administrative Offices are White at a ratio of one African American and one Latino and one employee who is of Asian and White ancestry in an organization structure (attached hereto) of thirty eight persons.

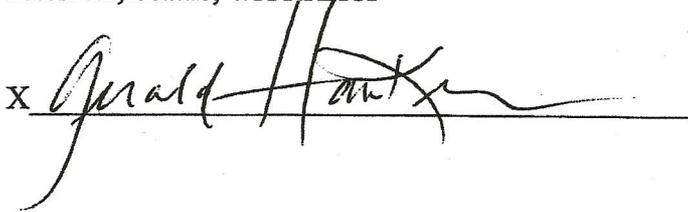
It is absolutely essential that diverse employees be hired to help inform the agency on how to best manage those individuals and connect with communities of color to elicit their help to appropriately re-enter offenders after their release. For instance, African Americans in this state makeup 3.4 percent of the state's population but are 19 percent of the prison population. African American employees are a mere 5.6 percent of the total agency workforce. And this data, does not encapsulate other minorities who are

experiencing similar issues. These examples speak to the agencies inability to practice and foster and environment that that is rooted in cultural sensitivity and competence.

We shall not further this letter by stating the obvious, but the undersigned beseech you and your department to investigate the deplorable racial under-representation of minorities in the Washington State Department of Corrections. As long as minorities continue to be deprived of the opportunity to compete for development and promotional opportunities, they will lag behind their White counterparts in social and economical success. Every employee, not just White, must be afforded the opportunity to advance in this agency. Moreover, it is equally important that the Washington State Department of Corrections adequately reflect the offender population in which it serves.

With all respect, the Undersigned salute you,

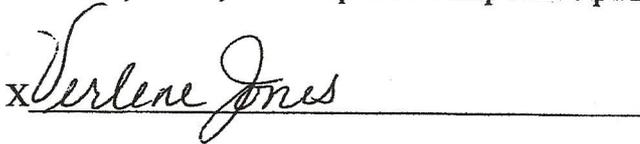
Gerald Hankerson
President, Seattle, WA NAACP

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Reverend Dr. Gregory Christopher
President, Tacoma, WA NAACP

X  _____

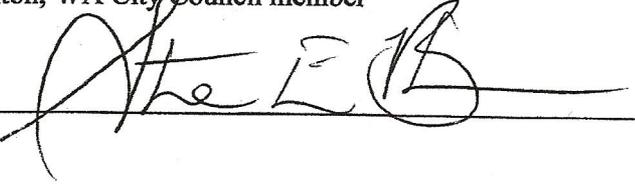
Verlene Jones
President, Seattle, WA Chapter A. Philip Randolph Institute

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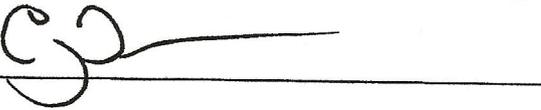
Dr. Sheley Secrest
Vice President, Washington/Alaska/Oregon NAACP

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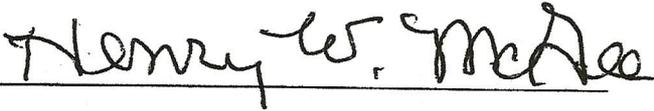
Greg Taylor
Renton, WA City Council member

X 

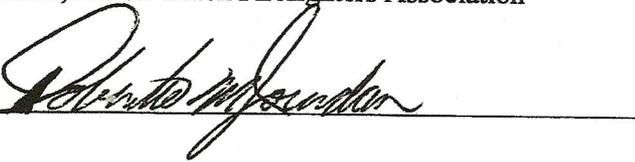
Reverend Steve Baber
Co chair, Washington State Christian Coalition

X 

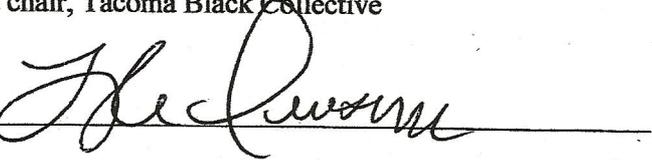
Professor Henry McGee
Seattle University School of Law

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Roberto Jourdan
President, Seattle Black Firefighters Association

X 

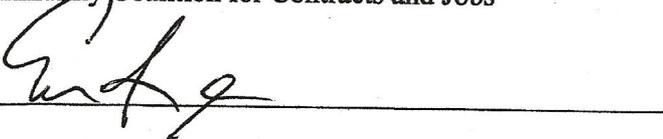
Lyle Quasim
Co chair, Tacoma Black Collective

X 

Reverend Lawrence R. Willis
President, Washington State Black Christian Clergy

X 

Eddie Rye Jr.
Community Coalition for Contracts and Jobs

X 

Dr. Robert L. Jeffrey, Sr.

Executive Director, Black Dollar Days Task Force

jeffreyrlj@aol.com

206-795-2343

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "R. Jeffrey", written over the phone number.