



Former Innocence Project Attorney Nina Morrison Now a Judge – Why It Matters

Ava Schwartzapfel

September 7, 2022

NEW YORK, NY – Nina Morrison, former senior litigation counsel for The Innocence Project, was sworn in as a District Judge for the Eastern District of New York in late August.

Morrison had been at the Innocence Project for 20 years prior to her nomination and has helped free “dozens” of wrongfully convicted individuals and singlehandedly pushed the boundaries of our legal system, according to The Innocence Project.

With her perspective, said the Project, Morrison will bring to the table “much-needed” experience of seeing the criminal system at its best and its worst.

The need for this level of experience was brought to the public’s attention after the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. Not only is she the first African American woman to serve on our Supreme Court, but she is also only the second Supreme Court justice with extensive background in our criminal legal system.

The Harvard Business Review shared that “working with people who are different from you may challenge your brain to overcome its stale ways of thinking and sharpen its performance,” in support of the notion diverse voices on the bench help achieve justice.

Cato Institute has reported approximately a ratio of four to one of prosecutors to defense attorneys on the bench, which ties into Judge Morrison’s representation and her perspective on incarcerated people being wrongfully convicted.

Studies suggest being surrounded in a diverse environment can implement a deeper understanding of issues revolving around what goes on the federal level prior to entering a courtroom. Identity can be sufficient enough for a court to become more aware and acknowledge the experiences that go on in America.

According to the Center for American Progress, having a woman on an appellate court panel will increase the likelihood of male appellate judges to look into plaintiffs involving sexual harassment and discrimination. More so, a judge of color on the panel will also encourage judges to find plaintiffs who claim their Voting Rights Act has been violated in affirmed cases.

Judge Morrison, according to supporters, vividly experienced how flawed the criminal legal system is at The Innocence Project. She experienced racial bias and misconduct which can negatively impact judicial decision-making.