

Cumberland County Racial Justice Act Facts

December 2015, the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that the Cumberland County District Attorney's office deserved more time to come up with a reasonable explanation for why it used race to remove African Americans from death penalty juries.

But, how can the Cumberland County District Attorney support explanations and reasons for removing African American jurors like....

- Removing Sean Richmond, an African American, from a jury because he said he did not feel victimized when he was robbed.
- Removing John Murray, an African American, from a jury because he "did not refer to the Court with any deferential statement other than saying yes or no." Prosecutors described his responses as militant.
- Removing Jay Whitfield from a jury because he knew some gang guys from playing basketball, but white juror, Tami Johnson was allowed to remain on the same jury despite admitting to being friends with gang members.
- Removing Forrester Bazemore, an African American, from a jury because he folded his arms and sat back in the chair and closed and blinked his eyes. Prosecutors deemed this as being evasive and defensive.
- Prosecutors also said Mr. Bazemore was removed because of his age, but John Seymour Sellers, a non African American juror with the exact same birthday, was allowed to remain on the jury.
- Singling out African American jurors and asking them about Haile Selassie, the former emperor of Ethiopia, and musicians Bob and Ziggy Marley, when no jurors of other races were asked questions like this.

What can the Cumberland County District Attorney say that changes proven facts like...

- Across North Carolina, prosecutors removed 53% of potential African American jurors in death penalty cases, but only 26% of all other people.
- In Cumberland County, even African Americans who supported the death penalty were kicked off juries 2.1 times as many times as all other people.
- 67% of all other people who themselves or a family member or close friend had been accused of a crime were allowed to serve on juries. By contrast, only 42% of African Americans with the same criteria were allowed to remain on juries.
- In 10 of 11 Cumberland County cases, prosecutors removed African Americans from sitting on death penalty juries at a significantly higher rate than other eligible people.

Don't you think the Cumberland County District Attorney's office should push to stop documented racial bias, instead of fighting to prove it doesn't exist?