

## Committee Finds No Legal Ethics Violation for Using N-word at Home

Michelle Odinet, a Louisiana judge, was caught on security camera making a discriminatory slur against an African American man who had broken into her family's truck. The footage of the incident and Odinet's comment went viral and resulted in widespread condemnation. In response to the outcry, Odinet resigned, and the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board opened an investigation.

The board charged Odinet with violating judicial conduct rules, which require judges to uphold the judiciary's integrity and avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all activities. However, they recognized that there was no ground for lawyer discipline under Louisiana law "for profanities and undignified/uncivil language used by a lawyer in their own home."

The board also noted that the Louisiana Supreme Court is yet to adopt Model Rule 8.4(g) of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, which bars discrimination based on race and other characteristics in conduct related to the practice of law. They also rejected the disciplinary counsel's contention that Odinet's conduct violated an ethics rule barring conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice since Odinet had already resigned. Hence, there was no prejudice to the administration of justice.

The board listed various mitigating factors in their decision, such as Odinet's lack of prior discipline, good character, and remorse for her behavior. They also noted that she had already suffered greatly by resigning from her position and losing income due to public attention to the incident. Ultimately, they determined that Odinet had already endured a harsher punishment than any disciplinary action they could have taken.

While it is clear that she regrets her behavior and has taken steps to rectify the situation, her comments still serve as a reminder of the importance of upholding professional standards in all areas of life. In this instance, Odinet's words profoundly impacted herself, her career, and the judicial system in Louisiana. It is a reminder to all of us that we must take care to think before we speak and strive for fairness and justice in all our interactions.

This case is an important lesson about the power of positive and negative words. All those in the legal system must avoid inappropriate comments and strive for justice and fairness in their dealings with others. We must also remember that these standards extend beyond our professional lives and into all aspects of our lives. Words can have an immense impact, both good and bad, so we must be mindful of how we use them. Doing so can help ensure that justice is served and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

### REFERENCES:

**Using N-word at home is not lawyer ethics violation, hearing committee says**