



SEMPER EADEM: “ALWAYS THE SAME”?

ACLU, NAACP Report Reveals Disturbing Racial Disparities in Somerset County Government

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PRINCESS ANNE, MD – The American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland and the Somerset County Branch of the NAACP today released a report questioning how and why Somerset County – the County with the third largest African-American population (42%) in Maryland – maintains a government that is all white at the upper levels, just the same as it has for centuries. The report details alarming racial disparities in employment and wages, including the fact that, at last filing, *not a single African American* was employed by the County in a professional, official, technical or paraprofessional position.

“Somerset County’s motto is ‘*Semper Eadem*,’ which is Latin for ‘Always the Same.’ And it’s true – the sad legacy of Somerset’s history of racial segregation and exclusion is all too evident in County government today,” said Deborah Jeon, Legal Director for the ACLU of Maryland. “But it is time for a new chapter to begin – one of equal opportunity for all the county’s residents. In issuing this report, we urge the community to come together and work to ensure that African Americans no longer feel the dream of equal opportunity and hope for their children’s futures are out of reach.”

The report examines demographics revealed in Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) filings by Somerset County government, which show disturbing disparities between the numbers of African Americans who live in Somerset County, and the number employed in the county government and school system, especially at the upper echelons. At the time of the last U.S. Census, Somerset County was 42 percent African-American, yet the government is heavily dominated by white officials and employees.

Key highlights from the report:

- *No African American in history* has been elected or appointed to a top job in County government. Those African Americans who are employed by Somerset County are disproportionately hired for lower level, lower paying jobs.
- *Not a single African American* was employed by Somerset County in a professional capacity in 2007. This was a step backward from 2005, when one African American was employed in a professional position.

- *Only one African-American* was hired by Somerset County in 2007 – just 6.7 percent of all new hires – and this single hire was to a service sector job.
- Although U.S. Census data shows that 42 percent of Somerset County’s population is African American, its EEO reports show that in 2007, *the County spent in excess of \$5,715,000 on the salaries of white employees, while only spending about \$750,000 on the salaries of African Americans.*

"The mission of the NAACP is to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights and there is no racial hatred or discrimination, which is why we today join with the ACLU to release this important report exposing serious racial disparities in Somerset County," said Kirkland Hall, President of the Somerset County NAACP. "Now is the time for meaningful action. The NAACP is calling on our community to work together to remove the barriers created by Somerset's long history of discrimination."

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