

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

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Contact: Julie Hodek, Public Information Officer
United States District Court for
the Northern District of Illinois
219 S. Dearborn St., #2548
Chicago, IL 60604
312-435-5693

District Court Hosts 200 CPS High School Students and Teachers in Courtroom as a Classroom Program

Today to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois welcomed over 200 Chicago Public Schools high school students and teachers participating in the court's Courtroom as a Classroom Program. A panel comprised of judges, federal law enforcement officers, assistant U.S. attorneys, a federal defender, and federal law clerks spoke of their careers in the federal justice system, answered questions, and then shared an informal discussion with students over a pizza lunch. Students also toured the [court's new history museum](#).

Chief Judge Rubén Castillo emphasized that judges are "regular people." Drawing on his own upbringing on Chicago's West Side as the son of immigrants, his father from Mexico and his mother from Puerto Rico, Judge Castillo invoked the life and career of Judge James Benton Parsons. As the first African-American federal judge appointed in the U.S. and who served in the Northern District of Illinois and as its Chief Judge, Judge Parsons, Chief Judge Castillo said, "broke ground here, creating a road for me and others on the bench to follow." Urging students to recognize that the same road was also within their reach, Judge Castillo added, "I hope you become interested in the law and try to make the world a better place."

Panelists reflected upon their own lives, sharing examples of overcoming challenges, seeking support from mentors, and taking risks.

Panelists included the following: U.S. District Chief Judge Rubén Castillo; U.S. District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman; Presiding U.S. Magistrate Judge Maria Valdez; Deputy U.S. Marshal Lydia Cruz; U.S. Supervisory Probation Officer Brian R. Driver; U.S. Supervisory Pretrial Officer Stephanie Norwood; Sergio Rodriguez, Federal Defender Program Staff Attorney, Nathalina

Hudson, Assistant U.S. Attorney; Jimmy Arce, Assistant U.S. Attorney; Ildefonso Mas, Law Clerk; Taurean Brown, Law Clerk.

Participating schools included William H. Wells Community Academy, William Jones College Preparatory, Stephen Tyng Mather High School, John Hancock College Preparatory High School, Farragut Career Academy, and Al Raby High School.

The Courtroom as a Classroom Program is in its third year and is an initiative of the District Court's Community Outreach Program, which is designed to provide the public a better understanding of the federal courts. More information about the court's outreach program can be found [here](#).

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