

DOJ Launches Probe Into Chicago Mayor After He Bragged About Race-Based Hiring

- Nancy Butler
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The Department of Justice launched an investigation into Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson (D) this week, accusing the mayor of racial discrimination in his hiring practices.

The Justice Department informed Johnson on Monday of the probe just one day after he appeared at a church and suggested that he had staffed his administration based on race. In a letter, Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon told Johnson that the investigation would examine whether the city violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits racial discrimination in employment. Dhillon highlighted Johnson's recent comments at a Woodlawn church where he touted the Black employees he's brought into his administration.

Dhillon told Johnson the investigation was "based on information suggesting that you have made hiring decisions solely on the basis of race."

"Considering these remarks, I have authorized an investigation to determine whether the City of Chicago is engaged in a pattern of practice of discrimination as set forth above," Dhillon said about Johnson, accusing him of potentially violating the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

On Sunday, Johnson appeared at the Apostolic Church of God in Woodlawn and talked about the racial makeup of his administration. He also emphasized hiring "our people."

"When we say 'our people hire our people,' I just want to name this," he said, pointing out how the percentage of white people in the mayor's office had dramatically decreased during his administration making it "the most diverse administration in the history of Chicago."

Johnson's office later released demographics of staffers in the mayor's office, indicating 34.3% are black, 30.5% are white, 23.8% are Hispanic, and 6.7% are Asian. He then went on to suggest that black people should be in charge because they would govern for the greater good.

"There are some detractors that will push back on me and say, 'The only thing that mayor, the mayor, talks about is the hiring of black people.' No, what I'm saying is, when you hire our people, we always look out for everybody else," he said. "We are the most generous people on the planet. I don't know too many cultures that have play cousins. That's how generous we are. We just make somebody a family member, right. That's just how we are." He then went on to list senior positions in his administration staffed by black people.

"Business and economic neighborhood development, the deputy mayor is a black woman. The Department of Planning and Development is a black woman. Infrastructure deputy mayor is a black woman. Chief operations officer is a black man. Budget director is a black woman. Senior advisor is a black man. And I'm laying that out because when you ask, how do we ensure that our people get a chance to grow their business? Having people in my administration that will look out for the interest of everyone — and everyone means you have to look out for the interest of black folks, because that hasn't happened."

Dhillon said that these comments prompted the question of whether similar racially based hiring decisions were being made systematically throughout the city's government.

"Considering these remarks, I have authorized an investigation to determine whether the City of Chicago is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination as set forth above," Dhillon said. "If these kind of hiring decisions are being made for top-level positions in your administration, then it begs the question whether such decisions are also being made for lower-level positions."

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker (D) strongly denied that Illinois is in violation of federal law.

“Instead of working with us to support law enforcement, the Trump Administration is making it more difficult to protect the public, just like they did when Trump pardoned the convicted January 6 violent criminals. We look forward to seeing them in court,” the governor’s office said at the time.

Nancy Butler

Nancy grew up in the South where her passion for politics first began. After getting her BA in journalism from Ole Miss she became an arts and culture writer for Athens Magazine where she enjoyed reporting on the eclectic music and art scene in Athens, GA.

However, her desire to report on issues and policies impacting everyday Americans won out and she packed her bags for Washington, DC. Now, she splits her time between the Nation’s Capital and Philadelphia where she covers the fast-paced environment of politics, business, and news.