

NC CRED

NC Commission on Racial & Ethnic Disparities in
the Criminal Justice System

JUSTICE UNBOUND: *The Judge's Duty to Address Bias and Inequality*



INTRODUCTION

In the ongoing struggle to rectify the entrenched inequities within our criminal legal system, the question of judges' roles remains a pivotal one. As community members, lawyers, and judges converged in Justice Unbound: The Judge's Duty to Address Bias and Inequality, they recognized the imperative of judges' active engagement in confronting systemic biases and injustices that permeate our legal framework.

Justice Unbound confronted the hesitancy among judges to publicly address systemic issues within the court system. Through candid discourse and insightful deliberations, this symposium aimed to embolden judges to embrace their ethical responsibility of eradicating bias from legal experiences and outcomes.

In a climate fraught with challenges and resistance against racial equity initiatives, this symposium served as a platform for navigating ethical dilemmas and fortifying resilience in the face of backlash. Our distinguished speakers, panelists, and breakout sessions equipped judges with practical tools to mitigate the insidious influence of bias in their roles.

Thank you to the planning committee, sponsors, and attendees who supported this symposium. Justice Unbound stands as a rallying cry, compelling jurists to embrace their pivotal role as architects of justice, steadfast in their commitment to dismantling systemic biases and fostering a legal system that embodies fairness and equity for all.

Sincerely,



James E. Williams Jr.
NC CRED Board Chair

A WORD FROM CHANGE OFTEN

Change Often - Social Innovation Firm extends our appreciation to all participants, speakers, and partners who contributed to the success of the Justice Unbound. Together, we have taken significant strides toward promoting racial equity within the judiciary.

Change Often has served as a partner to NC CRED since February 2022. We are honored to contribute to the work that reforms the criminal justice system.

Drawing upon our expertise in project management, stakeholder management, fundraising, event planning and community engagement, Change Often worked closely with NC CRED stakeholders to ensure the Symposium achieved its intended objectives with impact and effectiveness. The Symposium served as a pivotal platform for engaging in constructive dialogue, sharing innovative ideas, and implementing actionable strategies among legal professionals, policymakers, community leaders, and more to address issues of racial equity and diversity within the judiciary.

Our partnership with NC CRED exemplifies our shared commitment to driving positive change and advancing social justice initiatives. We are immensely grateful for the dedication and support of NC CRED throughout this collaboration.

Sincerely,

Change Often - Social Innovation Firm

<https://www.changeoftenllc.com/home>



Change Often®

MISSION & APPROACH

NC CRED is a nonpartisan organization that works across professional, political and ideological lines to identify, document, and develop strategies to reduce racial disparities in North Carolina's juvenile and criminal justice systems.

We're pursuing innovative, empirically-based solutions to reform the criminal justice system. The Commission envisions a criminal and juvenile justice system that is fair, humane, and effective.

CORE VALUES

COMMITMENT

We have a bold vision and dedicate ourselves to learning and continuous improvement to effect the changes we seek.

EQUITY

We commit ourselves to bringing racial equity to the center of policymaking and reform efforts.

Diversity

Our greatest strength is derived from diverse perspectives brought by committed people from different backgrounds.

Learning & Respect

We believe voicing unpopular or contentious views is a courageous act necessary for real dialogue.

JUSTICE UNBOUND:

The Judge's Duty to Address Bias and Inequality

Saturday, February 17, 2024

9:00am-4:30pm

Duke University

School of Law

Over the last few decades, community members, lawyers, researchers, and government actors have built a powerful movement to address the long history of racialized outcomes and excessive punishment in the criminal legal system. But is there a role for judges in such a movement and, if so, what should it be? The sponsors of this Symposium believe not only that judges have a role, but that they are indispensable in any meaningful effort to unwind racialized mass incarceration.

Visit the Justice Unbound Event Website:

<https://sites.google.com/changeoftenllc.com/nccredjusticeunbound/resources?pli=1>



Topics Covered During the Symposium:

- Keynote presented by Judge Nancy Gertner
- Justices Panel: What Role Should Judges Play in Addressing Bias & Inequity?
- Blueprint for Racial Justice: Impact and Possibilities for North Carolina
- North Carolina Developments and Innovations in the Judicial System
- Addressing Internal DEI Issues in the Judiciary
- Racial Equity in Jury Formation
- Fines and Fees - Ensuring Meaningful Ability to Pay Hearings and Ending the Criminalization of Poverty
- Restoring Faith in the Judiciary: Articulating A Vision of Judicial Ethics and Engagement

Watch the Recorded Sessions!

Keynote Presented by Judge Gertner: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckjFEz5zmWU>

Restoring Faith in the Judiciary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zdzj2GHmpws>

"Thoughtful
informative
inspiring"

SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS

EVENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- **186** registrants
- **128** attendees
- **44** judges in attendance
- **12** states represented, **25** North Carolina cities
- **18** sponsors
- **32** speakers engaged
- **200.17** total CLE Credit Hours

EVENT EVALUATION VALUE

- **100%** of attendees left feeling inspired to take action.
- **95%** of attendees are aware of steps they can take to promote equitable outcomes in the criminal justice system.
- **100%** of attendees feel connected to organizations they can collaborate with regarding this work.
- **95%** of attendees see a meaningful role for judges in the effort to mitigate structural racism in the legal system.
- **84%** of attendees want to join a more organized and long lasting effort to address these issues.



"What impressed me the most was the commitment in the room by judges and others to balance the demands of justice with the need for mercy and common sense. The entire event was well-planned and thought provoking."

SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS



"Wonderful Experience"

"Inspiring"

"Fantastic"

"Insightful, educational, and informative"

"Outstanding experience"

TOPICS OF INTEREST FOR ADDITIONAL TRAININGS

- Addressing costs/fines/fees
- Mitigating implicit bias
- Race equity and jury formation
- Internal racial equity audits and DEI initiatives
- Any topics covered during the NC Initiatives panel
- Increasing jury duty compensation
- Drug treatments course, restorative justice
- Diversion
- Cash bail reform

"Very engaging discussion"

"It was the most enlightening and important seminar I've ever attended."

"Great speakers and engaging conversation"

"Challenged the foundations for the practice of imposing legal financial obligations."

"It was a motivating and empowering event."

"It was a wonderful day. I actually made changes already in my handling of a few matters based on what I learned."



Acknowledgements

Justice Unbound Planning Team

James E. Williams Jr., NC CRED Board Chair

Emily Coward, Director, Duke Law Inclusive Juries Project

Senior Associate Justice Anita Earls, Supreme Court of North Carolina

Superior Court Judge Lou Trosch

Henderson Hill

Kayla Quick, Director of Project Strategy, Change Often - Social Innovation Firm

Casey Tyndall, Associate for Project Delivery, Change Often - Social Innovation Firm



Speakers

Alison Ashe-Card

Angie Weis Gammell

Annie Hudson-Price

Caitlin Fenhagen

Chief District Court Judge Elizabeth Trosch

Chief District Court Judge Regina Parker

Dean Patricia Timmons-Goodson

Derrick Anderson

Former District Court Judge Brooke Locklear Samson

District Court Judge Kendra Montgomery-Blinn

Edwin T. Bell

Former North Carolina Chief Justice Cheri Beasley

Judge Donovan Foughty

Judge Gayl Branum Carr

Retired Cumberland County Superior Court Judge

Gregory Weeks

Judge James Wynn

Judge Nancy Gertner (Ret.)

Judge Susan Maven

Justice Carla Wong McMillan

Mecklenburg County Clerk of Superior Court and

Judge of Probate Elisa Chinn-Gary

New Mexico Chief Justice Shannon Bacon

North Carolina Solicitor General Ryan Park

North Carolina Supreme Court Justice Robin Hudson (ret.)

Professor James E. Coleman, Jr.

Professor Nina Chernoff

Professor Thomas Ward Frampton

Tom Ross

Tonnya Kennedy Kohn

Sponsors & Partnering Organizations

Conrad, Trosch, and Kemmy, P. A.

Duke Energy Foundation

Duke University School of Law Inclusive Juries Project

Duke University School of Law Wilson Center for Science and Justice

Fialko Law PLLC

Frazier and Griffin Law Firm

Johnson and Groninger

Judge Donovan Foughty

Ken Lewis

Mills and Mahoney, P.A.

National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)

North Carolina Advocates for Justice

North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers

NC Bar Association (NCBA)

Race Matters for Juvenile Justice

The Governor's Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice

The Law Office of Bartina Edwards, PLLC

Tin, Fulton, Walker & Owen

THANK YOU!

This event would not have been possible without your unwavering support, dedication, and commitment to creating an equitable and just judiciary system. Please stay connected with NC CRED on Facebook and LinkedIn!

NC CRED

NC Commission on Racial & Ethnic Disparities in
the Criminal Justice System



Continue visiting the Justice Unbound website:

[https://sites.google.com/changeoftenllc.com/nccredjusticeunbound/resources?pli=1!](https://sites.google.com/changeoftenllc.com/nccredjusticeunbound/resources?pli=1)

This site contains all symposium information including speaker information and resources, sponsors, the program agenda, and original compilations of North Carolina and national efforts to address bias and inequality in the legal system.

NC CRED encourages you to use these materials in your efforts to address these issues in your communities!

This Site also contains an Op-Ed titled "Our courts are plagued with inequality. Judges have a chance to address it." by James E. Coleman and Emily Coward.

