



# National Consortium on Racial & Ethnic Fairness in the Courts

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Join us in North Dakota from **Sunday, May 1, through Wednesday, May 4, 2022**, for our 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. The theme of the conference, “**Moving from Conversation to Action**” will continue our review of initiatives and reforms taking place across the country that further the mission of racial and ethnic equity in our courts and communities. Since our last conference, we have witnessed a growing number of successful actions undertaken to eradicate the vestiges of systemic inequity at the state level. One such movement relates to the removal of Confederate monuments from public spaces, local courthouses and other government buildings, a polarizing debate that has been ongoing for a decade.

In July 2020, following the murder of George Floyd, the National Consortium issued a resolution calling for the removal of confederate monuments in public spaces. The Resolution on the Removal of Confederate Monuments from Judiciary Spaces can be accessed using the following [link](#). We recognized that “such markers and symbols of inhumanity positioned outside courthouses and centers of government power are a constant reminder of prejudice, hate and racism against black and brown people, and therefore, are inherently incompatible with a judiciary that should be dedicated to the Constitutional assurance of justice and equality under the law.” We called on the leaders of the highest courts in each state, tribal nation, territory, and related commissions and task forces to “take action resulting in the immediate removal of all Confederate monuments, memorials, flags, plaques, and other symbols and markers of racism and white supremacy, from all public spaces on, around or within all property upon which courthouses or judicial offices of any kind are located.”

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) reported at least 160 monuments have been removed after George Floyd’s death. Most recently, in March 2022, a statue that was believed to be the last Confederate monument in Maryland was removed from a Talbot County courthouse lawn. (See “Maryland’s Last Public Confederate Monument” [here](#).) The National Consortium recognizes the actions of several states to remove or relocate monuments and other environmental tributes to the Confederacy, yet there are several hundred monuments that remain. We look forward to hearing reports from states who have undertaken this initiative during our State Report session.

On the federal level, in November 2021, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland [announced](#) the establishment of a process to review and replace derogatory names of the nation’s geographic features. Department of the Interior Secretarial [Order 3404](#). declared “squaw” to be a derogatory term and ordered the Board on Geographic Names Task Force – the federal body tasked with naming geographic places – to implement procedures to remove the term from federal usage. “Racist terms have no place in our vernacular or on our federal lands. Our nation’s lands and waters should be places to celebrate the outdoors and our shared cultural heritage – not to perpetuate the legacies of oppression,” said **Secretary Haaland**. “Today’s actions will accelerate an important process to reconcile derogatory place names and mark a significant step in honoring the ancestors who have stewarded our lands since time immemorial.”

Secretary Haaland next issued [a press release on February 22, 2022](#) announcing a list of potential replacement names for more than 660 geographic features that had included the derogatory term “sq\_\_\_.” The Secretary stated; “Words matter, particularly in our work to make our nation’s public lands and waters accessible and welcoming to people of all backgrounds. Consideration of these replacements is a big step forward in our efforts to remove derogatory terms whose expiration dates are long overdue .... Throughout this process, broad engagement with Tribes, stakeholders and the general public will help us advance our goals of equity and inclusion.”

Advocates for race equity in many different spaces have objected for generations to the use of Native American and indigenous images and names in a manner and context they considered derogatory. The National Consortium supports the actions of Secretary Haaland to eradicate these indignities as consistent with the spirit of our 2020 resolution. We hope to receive an update on these national efforts during our upcoming conference.

The National Consortium invites state commissions and tribal courts to submit a report on their equity, diversity, and inclusion programs and systemic change initiatives, and to participate in our State of the States report session. Guidance on how to submit a written report by **April 15, 2022** is provided click [here](#).

We look forward to welcoming you to North Dakota on May 1, 2022!

Susan F. Maven

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Retired Judge of the Superior Court of New Jersey