



# National Consortium on Racial & Ethnic Fairness in the Courts

SECRETARIAT: NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS, 300 NEWPORT AVENUE, WILLIAMSBURG, VA 23185  
WWW.NATIONAL-CONSORTIUM.ORG

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Hon. Donovan J. Foughty  
District Judge  
Northeast Judicial District Court  
524 4th Avenue, NE, Unit 10  
Devils Lake, ND 58301  
(701) 662-1318  
dfoughty@ndcourts.gov

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## SAVE THE DATE

**WHAT:** 2023 National Consortium Conference

**WHEN:** May 21 – 24, 2023

**WHERE:** Seattle, Washington

**FROM:** Donovan Foughty, President/Moderator

The 2023 Conference of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts will be May 21 – 24, 2023 in Seattle, Washington. The Board of Directors of the National Consortium is looking forward to an engaging and informative conference. We invite courts to showcase innovative programs and initiatives through the conference session entitled “Report of State”. It is an opportunity to share best practices.

Contact Nikiessa Cosby ([ncosby@ncsc.org](mailto:ncosby@ncsc.org)) at the National Center for State Courts if you would like to participate in the Report of States. Attached to this Save the Date notice is a short history of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC FAIRNESS IN THE COURTS**

The New York Commission on Minorities, now known as [the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission](#), in December 1988 under the leadership of its chairperson, Ambassador Franklin H. Williams, organized and hosted the first meeting of existing state court task forces and commission on racial and ethnic bias. The purpose of the meeting was to provide the task forces and commissions (New Jersey, New York, Michigan, and Washington) an opportunity to discuss the status of their research and program activities.

One of the outcomes of this historic meeting was a decision by the respective chairpersons and executive directors to schedule a follow-up meeting in Orlando, FL from January 20-22, 1989 for the purpose of exploring and adopting a formal structure to enhance communication between existing and future tasks forces and commission on racial and ethnic bias in the courts.

Each of the states engaged in this work at the time were represented by their respective chairperson and executive director: Ambassador Franklin H. Williams and Edna Wells Handy, Esq. (New York); The Honorable Theodore Z. Davis and Yolande P. Marlow, Ph.D. (New Jersey); The Honorable Charles Z. Smith and Desiree B. Leigh, M.A. (Washington); and The Honorable Harold Hood and Lorraine H. Weber, Esq. (Michigan).

As an outcome of the convening in Florida, the organization known today as the [National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts](#) was formed in 1989. Since its inception and throughout the course of its nearly 35-year history, the work of the National Consortium has received support through resolutions by the [Conference of Chief Justices](#) (CCJ) and the [Conference of State Court Administrators](#) (COSCA). While the [structure](#) of the National Consortium has changed over the years, its [mission](#) remains the same: to eliminate racial and ethnic bias in local judicial systems.

The National Consortium continues to encourage courts to create task forces, commissions, and other advisory bodies to examine the treatment and experience of communities of color in the courts and to find remedies and solutions to existing barriers to justice through the courts. Consortium members generously share from their experiences on developing reports on racial and ethnic bias in the courts and formulating strategies to address bias within judicial systems.

The National Consortium's [conference and annual meeting](#) is now its 35th year. A principal element of the Consortium's annual conference programming is to study the legal failures of the past. For example, in collaboration with the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Consortium offered an in-depth look at the failure of the judicial system in Nazi Germany and explored whether such failure could occur in the United States. Conference speakers have presented on the legal breakup of Native American families during the boarding school era and the incarceration of U.S. citizens of Japanese heritage during World War II. The Consortium has looked at the root causes of the community response to Ferguson and the implications of the murder of George Floyd by law enforcement officers.

In addition to its conference and annual meeting, the National Consortium sponsors virtual programming on topics relevant to its mission and as an organization participates actively in the [NCSC Blueprint for Racial Justice in the Courts](#) and the [CCJ/COSCA Community Engagement in the State Court Initiative](#). The National Consortium also partners with organizations whose own efforts relate to the work of eliminating bias in the administration of justice and promoting public trust and confidence in courts. The National Consortium is a resource. Consortium Board members provide training on implicit bias and have engaged in work on an array of systemic reforms including criminal justice reform, access to courts, and improving diversity and inclusion within court systems.

The [National Consortium leadership](#) includes appellate and trial court judges, court administrators, lawyers, and social scientists working to improve judicial systems and eliminate racial and ethnic biases in these systems. The members of the National Consortium's Board of Directors and Advisers include representatives of states and communities from large urban areas to the most rural areas in the country.

[The National Consortium invites you to join in this work](#) and be part of a national network of colleagues committed to advancing equity in the administration of justice and promoting public trust and confidence in the courts. For more information on the National Consortium, visit [the National Consortium's website](#) and follow the National Consortium on social media.

/September 9, 2022