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National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts Celebrates 25 Years

Edward C. Clifton & H. Clifton Grandy

Recognizing the ever-changing landscape and the increasing challenges that face justice systems committed to achieving the promise of “equality before the law,” the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts (“National Consortium”) brings together thought leaders and delegates of state justice systems from around the country to share their collective knowledge about best practices within their court systems for achieving fairness and access to justice for all. For 25 years, the National Consortium has served as a conduit to provide a forum for discussions on relevant topics pertaining to identifying and eliminating bias against people of targeted racial and ethnic groups both through its annual conference and through peer-to-peer technical assistance. Additionally, the National Center for State Courts, as secretariat for the National Consortium, serves as a warehouse of information by compiling the annual reports that the National Consortium members present at annual meetings; bibliographies from each jurisdiction; and information regarding task force/commission structure, governance, staffing, research, and the issues addressed by implemented projects (http://www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/ref/). Thanks to the collaborative efforts between the Board of the National Consortium and the American Judges Association, we are happy for the opportunity to provide education through a new forum, *Court Review*.

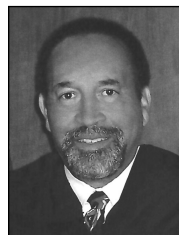
This March the National Consortium will celebrate its 25th Anniversary during its annual conference in Washington D.C. (March 20-23). The conference, titled *Celebrating the Past as We Envision and Embrace the Future*, offers a fantastic agenda filled with nationally renowned speakers on a broad range of topics.

In collaboration with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the conference will offer an in-depth look at the failure of the judicial system in Nazi Germany and an exploration of whether such a failure could occur in the U.S. court system. Other days of the conference will include sessions on the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and poverty; the history and future of the National Consortium; perceptions of justice held by juveniles and young adults; best practices in ensuring access to justice; and fairness and access in the criminal, juvenile, civil, and family court sys-

tems. We encourage you to register online at <http://www.consortiumonline.net/>.

Although the National Consortium recognizes that courts across our nation are faced with unprecedented budgetary and program challenges, the National Consortium maintains that courts must recognize they have an obligation to treat **all** of the people that come before them fairly. This obligation of fair treatment should apply equally to racially and/or ethnically diverse populations.

On behalf of the current members of the Board of Directors of the National Consortium, as well as the emeritus members of our Board of Directors, we would like to extend our profound appreciation to Judge Donovan Foughty (N.D.), Judge Orlinda Naranjo (TX), Dr. Yolande Marlow, Ph.D. (N.J.), Dr. Elizabeth Neeley, Ph.D. (Neb.), Lisette (Mimi) McCormick, Esq. (Pa.), Erica Chung (Wash.), Gregory Conyers, Esq. (Mich.) and John Douglas (Colo.), and the members of this Ad Hoc Project Committee for its time and effort in furthering this publication.



Edward C. Clifton (J.D. UCLA 1975) has served as an Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court since September 1994. From 1996 until the present, he has been a member of the Rhode Island Supreme Courts' Permanent Advisory Committee on Women and Minorities, serving as chair from 2010 until 2012. Judge Clifton has been a member of the Board of Directors of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts since 2006, becoming president/moderator in 2012.



H. Clifton Grandy, J.D., ICM Fellow, is a senior court manager for the District of Columbia Courts focusing on fairness and access issues. He is the secretary/treasurer and a board member of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts and was the director of the First National Conference on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts, which was held in 1995.

“The National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts is an extraordinary voice for the judiciary and the justice system on the issues of race and justice in our courts. It has played an important role in ensuring fairness in the justice system.

The most recent efforts with respect to language access to the courts will, I know, prove very fruitful in again providing equal access to justice. I congratulate the Consortium and its historical contributions. I know the Consortium has a great future in these areas.”

Hon. Richard B. Teitelman
Chief Justice
Missouri Supreme Court

“It can—and must—be said that the Consortium has served as a catalyst for innovative partnerships, engaging public discourse, and creative problem solving, from which Maryland has benefited. Again, on behalf of the Maryland Judiciary, I congratulate you for your twenty-five years of services to the state judiciary and, most important, to the citizens they serve.”

Hon. Robert Bell
Chief Judge
Maryland Court of Appeals

“The Consortium has been a valuable resource over the years. We look forward to continuing our partnership as we work together to ensure that all persons have equal access to our courts.”

Hon. Petra Jimenez Maes
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of
New Mexico