



# Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities

Winter 2008

## Overview of the 19th Annual Conference of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts

ON MAY 3 -5, 2007, The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities along with the Office of Court Administration hosted the 19th Annual Conference of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts (NCREFC) at the Marriott Hotel Brooklyn Bridge. The Conference's theme was "Saving our Children; Justice and Fair Treatment of Youth in the Courts." The conference was a culmination of a local conference held months earlier on the similar topic of minority young people receiving equal treatment in the Courts.

The National Consortium consists of Commissions from other states similar to the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission dedicated to eradicating discrimination and inequality in the Courts. The planning of the conference was a year long process.

The NCREFC was attended by approximately two hundred (200) persons. It included representatives from 40 states including Hawaii and Puerto Rico. The attendees consisted of judges, attorneys, community agency representatives, and the Office of Court Administration personnel. The three day conference included nationally renowned speakers such as Dr. Jeremy Travis, President, John Jay College of Criminal Justice; Honorable Byron Brown, Mayor, Buffalo, New York; Honorable John Liu, Councilman, Flushing, New York; Honorable Dora L. Irizarry, United States District Court, and Congressman Charles B. Rangel, Chair of the Ways and Means Committee. These leaders spoke of their commitment to young people and ensuring that our resources are dedicated to improving their lives. President Jeremy Travis of John Jay College of Criminal Justice provided vital statistics that detailed the troubling affect of the justice systems impact on minority youth and their communities.

The core of the conference were the information packed innovative seminars. The workshops were on issues such as "Cultural and Language Barriers to Justice", "Alternatives to Incarceration and Mentoring Programs", "Teen Violence and the Media", "Collateral Consequences for Youth", "People of Color in the Profession", "Innovative Elementary and High School Programs Focusing on Gangs, The Law, The Courts and the Community" and the "Disproportionate Number of Minority Youth in the Family and Criminal Court Systems." Attendees left the conference empowered with strategies to effectively navigate the experience of young people who come in contact with the Courts. The seminars also provided alternatives and prevention programs for borderline youth. In this newsletter, we outline the workshop discussions and their resulting recommendations. ■



HON. LEWIS L. DOUGLASS  
CHAIR

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**The conference attendees also visited Courts to witness innovative solutions to legal issues.**

Participants visited the Red Hook Community Justice Center, Integrated Domestic Violence Court, Midtown Community Court, Drug Court/ Brooklyn Treatment Court and Harlem Community Justice Center. Many of the sitting judges of those courts met with the conference attendees to provide them with further detail about the functioning of their courts. The attendees walked away with a better understanding and appreciation of the efforts made to provide a holistic approach for justice in the lives of young people.

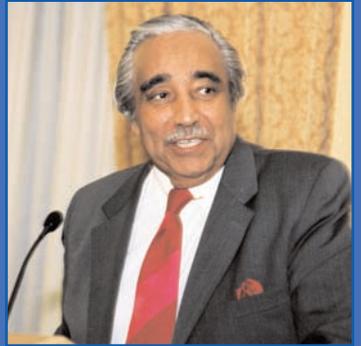


Court Visit to Harlem Community Justice Center



Chief Justice, Judith S. Kaye receiving the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities Service Award by Honorable Lewis L. Douglass.

**The conference concluded with Chief Justice, Judith S. Kaye receiving the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities Service Award** for her long standing commitment to young people. Judge Kaye encouraged those in attendance to continue to find and make pathways of solutions that protect the rights of young people and ethnic fairness. The keynote speaker, Congressman Charles B. Rangel impressed upon the attendees the importance of the judiciary and the court system working together to effectuate positive change in the lives of young people.



CONGRESSMAN CHARLES B. RANGEL  
Member of the United States Congress  
Chair of the Ways and Means Committee

**The Commission believes that it is through these dialogues that we can promote respect and sensitivity and be a conduit for the concerns of young minorities in the Court system.** Although the conference was a success on many levels, it was only a small part of the great responsibility that we have to our young people. The Commission intends to continue to pursue justice and fair treatment of youth in the Courts. ■

# PLENARY SESSIONS

**One of the conference highlights included** an interactive plenary session entitled “Teen Violence, The Media, and the Courts” which involved a real life situation presented by Prevention Focus, Inc., a Western New York Agency dedicated to the belief that education is the answer to the problems of youth violence, gangs and drugs. There was heated debate among the audience as the attendees expressed their opinion on how to resolve a teen racial issue that had occurred at a local high school.



Victoria R. Gillison,(left) program coordinator of Changing Focus, looks on as staff members from Prevention Focus presents real life situations.



KEVIN GLOVER  
Teen Services Supervisor,  
Prevention Focus

# 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC FAIRNESS IN THE COURTS

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### I. Cultural and Language Barriers to Justice

THE BREAKOUT SESSION “Cultural and Language Barriers to Justice” consisted of an interactive discussion between the audience and panel members from New York, Florida, California and Ohio. Each panel member shared what strides were being made to facilitate access to justice for persons with limited proficiency in the English language, and the growing immigrant population in their respective jurisdictions. Also discussed was whether there were special needs for the youth population.

The presentation was moderated by NYS Administrative Supreme Court Justice **Randall T. Eng**, Queens County, who delivered an insightful perspective based on his own experiences as a judge and his personal connections to this issue.

His mother served the NYS court system as a freelance Cantonese interpreter in the past. He posed real-life hypothetical scenarios to the audience which invited questions and constructive dialogue. It became evident throughout the afternoon, that New York state is in the forefront of many of these issues. The information shared at this event was requested from several states including Ohio and Indiana, who also invited Justice Eng to come and moderate a similar discussion in that state. The presentation ended with Judge Eng prompting a wish list from each member as to how to continue improving language access and eliminating any cultural and language barriers that may exist in the courts. ■



Honorable Randall T. Eng moderated, as panelist (*left to right*) J.M. Munoz, Sandra Bryan, Bruno Romero and Augustin Servin de la Mora spoke about cultural and language barriers to justice.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS *(continued)*

## II.

### Alternatives to Incarcerations and Mentoring Programs

**THIS PANEL DISCUSSED THE ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS CURRENTLY IN EXISTENCE** to limit the number of incarcerated youth. The panelists highlighted their organizations efforts for community based solutions.

**SOME OF THE ISSUES DISCUSSED INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING.**

- Program quality is essential.** The goal is to help people get on the right track, first by making sure they complete their mandate (and thus avoid the consequences of being warranted and returned to court) and then by helping them to keep from re-offending. Running a high-quality program doesn't solve the problems of racial and ethnic disparities in the court system, but it goes a long way towards reducing negative consequences of those disparities.
- You can run a good program, even on a very large scale.** Bronx Community Solutions has shown that large-scale centralized courthouses can achieve some of the same positive results that have been achieved in smaller scale demonstration projects. It costs more money, but it's not prohibitively expensive. Other boroughs like Manhattan are looking to adopt their own version of Bronx Community Solutions.
- You can help a mandated offender and the community at the same time.** Many citizens are conflicted about how they want the courts to respond to quality-of-life crime: on the one hand, they take these offenses very seriously and want consequences for breaking the law, but on the other hand, they don't want the system to be excessively punitive and they want people to get help for their problems. This conflict is particularly acute in low-income communities because people might know a neighbor or family member who is involved in the courts. Efforts can be made to combine punishment and help in the same package.



Angel Rodriquez speaks as (left to right) moderator Honorable Michael Corriero and panelists Aubrey Fox and Marsha Weissman listen intently.

### III. Teen Violence and the Media

**THE PANEL DISCUSSED whether the media disproportionately portrays minority youth as perpetrators of crime and under-represented as victims of crime.** Also of concern was whether it was necessary for the media to report the race of the perpetrators and victims unless it is intrinsically relevant to the story.

**THE DISCUSSION CREDITED SEVERAL SOLUTIONS TO INCREASE UNBIASED REPORTING INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:**

- The media should not identify the race of the victim unless it is critical to the story.
- The news reports should focus on the external factors that contribute to youth crime and violence.
- The media should provide more balanced news reporting by sharing stories of positive images of youth.
- In addition, the media should be introspective and periodically monitor their reporting to ensure fairness.



Moderator Les Payne addresses the audience and his panel members, (left to right) Alfonso A. Castillo, Mae Cheng, Shola Lynch and Sheryl McCarthy.

### IV. Collateral Consequences for Youth

**YOUNG PEOPLE WHO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM (particularly, the criminal justice system) face a daunting array of counter-productive debilitating barriers** that make it much more difficult for them to succeed in many important aspects of life. These "Collateral Consequences" are over and above the direct penalties of their underlying actions. They are the unintended consequences of their involvement in the justice system. Most schools have what is known as a zero-tolerance policy. Behaviors that used to result in detention or at most suspension are now leading to criminal charges. Once a child has a criminal record, it has a direct effect on their future, be it applying to college or trying to access the work place. Their childhood is interrupted and thrown off-course.



Leonard E. Noisette makes his point as (left to right) moderator Honorable Richard B. Lowe and panel members Laurie Parise, Anita R. Marton and Gemma Solimene look on.

**MANY RECOMMENDATIONS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FROM THIS PANEL OF EXPERTS WERE PRESENTED, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:**

- In states where juvenile records are expunged or sealed, students may not be legally required to answer about their past legal problems. States should examine their laws and policies to eliminate unfair barriers.
- Cities should look at their school's zero-tolerance policies and make sure that they are not criminalizing actions that could and should be handled at internal disciplinary matters.
- Youth involved with the criminal justice system should be educated about their rights - they should know what kind of criminal record, if any, they have, and what impact that will have with regard to employment, voting, student loans, housing, etc. They should also be taught what they can do to lessen those barriers.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PART 2

## I. People of Color in the Profession

In this captivating session panelists reveal the challenges and successes of People of Color in the Profession. This session addressed the challenges of succeeding in different types of professions in the law.

**Moderator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Wilhemina Tribble**, *President of LTA Inc., Co-chair, Florida Supreme Court Standing Committee on Fairness and Bias in the Courts*

**Panel Members:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Janiece Brown Spitzmueller, Esq.** *Chairperson, Minorities in the Profession Committee, Association of the Bar of the City of New York*

**Diana S. Sen, Esq.**, *Senior Litigation Associate Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, LLP; Vice President, Puerto Rican Bar Association*



Wilhemina Tribble moderates as panelists discuss their professions, (left to right) Janiece Brown Spitzmueller, Taa Grays, Diana S. Sen, Patrick A. Michel and Michael Oshima.

**Patrick A. Michel, Esq.**, *Associate Counsel, Carter Ledyard & Milburn LLP*

**Taa Grays, Esq.** *Assistant General Counsel, Met Life Insurance Company; Director, National Bar Association, Region 2*



Former Gang member, recounts his experience with the Council of Unity program, as Judge Ling - Cohan and attendees applaud him for his positive lifestyle change.

## II. Elementary and High School Programs Focusing on Law, the Courts, and the Community

**SEASONED JUDGES, COURT ADMINISTRATORS AND YOUTH SPECIALISTS from across the country were captivated by a former Crip and a former Blood gang member,** who told their story of how, despite the fact that the Bloods and the Crips are sworn to eliminate each other, they became best friends through the

innovative program, Council for Unity, and turned their lives around. So moved by the recounting of their experiences, that there were few dry eyes in the house. Council for Unity was just one of the programs spotlighted in the panel entitled "Innovative Elementary and High School Programs Focusing on Law, the Courts and the Community."

**The panel, organized and moderated by Justice Doris Ling-Cohan** (Commissioner, Franklin Williams Commission) focused on innovative educational and community programs that offer alternatives to our youth. The innovative programs discussed included Council For

Unity, which focuses on at-risk kids, with a particular emphasis on rescuing youth from gangs and other negative peer influences, and teaching them self worth, meditation skills and tolerance; Legal Outreach Manhattan and The Bronx School of Law, Government and Justice, which integrates legal concepts and skills into the curriculum while providing opportunities for kids to learn about legal careers, were highlighted. The panel also featured the Deputy Mayor of the City of New York, Dennis Walcott, who provided an overview of other innovative educational programs offered in New York City.

**The audience reception was enthusiastic**, with many of the audience requesting information on the programs to take back to their respective states and localities. In fact, Buffalo and White Plains have made a formal request for expansion of Council For Unity into those cities. In addition, because of audience reaction, a committee, chaired by Justice Ling-Cohan, was formed which will focus on expanding the services offered by Council for Unity to the NYS Courts focusing on kids involved with gangs, with a particular emphasis on the Riverhead courts, and youth with cases in NYC Supreme, Criminal and Family Courts.

# III. Disproportionate Number of Minority Youth in the Family and Criminal Court Systems

**THE WORKSHOP ON THE “Disproportionate Number of Minority Youth in the Family and Criminal Court Systems”** brought together judges, attorneys, social workers and others interested in learning about and addressing this important issue. Participants in the workshop focused on devising solutions.

The workshop entitled, **“Disproportionate Number of Minority Youth in the Family and Criminal Court Systems”** focused on the reality that minority children are more likely to come into contact with the criminal and family court systems. An overriding theme throughout the discussion was the need to make sure that disproportionality is always considered before decisions are made. Participants recognized that a solution to this complex problem will involve both a systemic overhaul and individual changes in behavior.

**Other suggestions coming out of the workshop included:** ensuring that social workers involved with foster children are properly trained in cultural competence to avoid stereotyping; appropriating money to study the issue in the family court setting; a greater emphasis on forensic psychology training for those representing children; diversion programs; subsidized guardianship for family members to reduce kinship foster care rates; individual development accounts and financial literacy training; family group decision making; and one family one judge programs.



The audience listens as slides are presented on the topic.



Honorable Gayle P. Roberts, moderator, listens as panelist discuss the issues.

## SPEAKERS AT THE CONFERENCE



**JEREMY TRAVIS**  
President, John Jay College of Criminal Justice



**HONORABLE DORA L. IRIZARRY**  
United States District Court Eastern District



**HONORABLE BYRON BROWN**  
Mayor, Buffalo, New York



**JOHN C. LIU**  
Council Member, Flushing, NY  
First Asian Pacific American Legislator in NYC; Chair of Transportation Committee

## NY LEO RECEPTION

ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2007, the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities with the New York State Judicial Institute and the New York County Lawyers' Association hosted a reception for New York State's first Legal Education Opportunity Program. The reception was held at the New York County Lawyers' Association. The New York Leo Program (NY LEO) will assist minority low-income college graduates in acquiring the fundamental and practical skills necessary to succeed in law school. The students undergo an intensive six-week summer program at the New York Judicial Institute in White Plains, New York.

The reception was attended by the NY LEO fellows and judges from throughout New York State who agreed to act as mentors for the students during their first year of law school. The students expressed their appreciation and excitement about the support they were receiving as they embarked on their legal education experience. The Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye established



(top) A reception for the New York Legal Education Opportunity Fellows (lower) A few of the judges, with Catherine Christian, president of NYCLA, who have volunteered to act as mentors.

the New York Legal Education Opportunity Program to help promote academic success for individuals historically under-represented in the legal profession. ■



JEWEL WILLIAMS

## JEWEL WILLIAMS, CHIEF, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION

JEWEL WILLIAMS was recently appointed Chief of the Department of Public Safety at the New York State Office of Court Administration. Ms. Williams has worked for the

State of New York Unified Court System for over 25 years. She is currently responsible for developing and implementing the emergency management plan guidelines in the state's courts, inspecting court-houses to ensure compliance with policies and procedures, overseeing 4000 court officers, ensuring proper personnel training, and

advising judges and court administrators on special security matters. In previous positions with the New York Unified Court System, Ms. Williams has formulated and administered training programs, ensured facility and staff compliance with security policies, and evaluated security personnel performance.

She earned a Master's Degree in Homeland Defense and Security from the Naval Postgraduate School in

Monterey, California and a B.A. from the College of New Rochelle in New York.

Ms. Williams is also currently serving as a consultant for the National Center for State Courts. ■

- Ms. Williams is affiliated with the New York State Law Enforcement Training Directors
- The National Law Enforcement Association
- The American Society of Industrial Security (ASIS) International
- National Association of Court Management
- Member, American Society of Industrial Security (ASIS) International
- Member, The International Association of Chiefs of Police

## JUDGE MARGARITA LOPEZ TORRES

**IN 2005, JUDGE MARGARITA LOPEZ TORRES MADE HISTORY** as the first woman of color to serve as a judge in Kings County Surrogate's Court. Born in the southwest part of Puerto Rico, her family migrated to the United States of America in hopes of a better life for the family.

**Judge Lopez Torres' youth personifies the African parable, "it takes a village to raise a child."** Growing up in East New York, she recalls her mother telling her that she was more than her surroundings and could go beyond the boundaries of her neighborhood. She also recalls an elementary school teacher that demanded excellence and taught her the joy of reading. Her horizons were further expanded by community and high school programs such as the Upward Bound Program started by President Lyndon B. Johnson where she was exposed to the Arts, and a Kingsborough Community College program that exposed her to a college environment. In High School, it was a "store front lawyers program" that led Judge Lopez Torres to choose the law as a way to meet what she describes as "her social responsibility."

**After graduating from Rutgers University School of Law,** Judge Lopez Torres worked as a legal services attorney servicing Spanish Harlem and the Lower East Side. She describes her experience working with the vulnerable in those communities as a "wonderful privilege and responsibility." Since 1992, she has served as a judge in Civil Court, Family Court, Criminal Court and now in Surrogate's Court. As a Surrogate, she deals with issues of probate, administration, adoptions and guardianship of children. In an effort to increase the number of attorney's of color practicing in Surrogate's Court, the Surrogate's Court has offered a course in Accounting and invited members of the minority bars. She has also participated in a Surrogate's Practice seminar geared toward minority attorneys.

**Judge Lopez Torres says, "Promoting diversity in the courts goes to the principles of Democracy.** If people feel that they are left out they will not respect the laws. It is important to have different backgrounds and perspectives on the bench."

**Judge Lopez Torres is the mother of two children and grandmother of two grandchildren.** She refers to women as great multi-taskers who rise and meet the challenges of their many different roles. It is clear that Judge Lopez Torres has a passion for justice that will continue to be her guiding light. We salute Judge Lopez Torres.

## HONORABLE BETTY CALVO-TORRES

**ON JUNE 19, 2007, BETTY CALVO-TORRES became the first Hispanic female to serve as a Buffalo City Court Judge.** Judge Calvo-Torres was appointed to a vacancy in Buffalo City Court by Mayor W. Brown. When making the historical appointment Mayor Brown said, "Betty Calvo-Torres is an excellent lawyer who knows the City Court system well and will serve the citizens of our city with distinction."

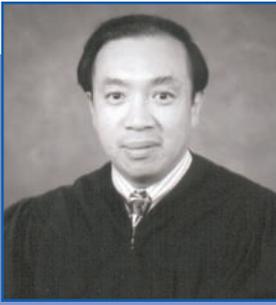
**During her legal career Hon. Calvo-Torres worked as Staff Counsel for NICYO,** Assistant District Attorney in Erie County and a private practitioner, owning her practice while also of counsel to a plaintiff's litigation firm. Hon. Calvo-Torres has served as president of the Minority Bar Association of WNY, the Hispanic Women's League and Vice-Chair of the Board of Commissioner for BMHA. She also sits on

the board of the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo and Planned Parenthood. Hon. Calvo-Torres is also a frequent speaker/lecturer at a number of upstate colleges and universities.

**Woven through the fabric of her career are outstanding achievements too numerous to mention,** yet from her first job as an attorney to her current position as a judge, Hon. Calvo-Torres has earned and upheld a stellar reputation for integrity, professionalism and dedication to the justice system of New York State and the community at large.



Honorable  
BETTY CALVO-TORRES



HONORABLE  
RANDALL T. ENG

## Congratulations

**THE FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS JUDICIAL COMMISSION CONGRATULATES THE HONORABLE RANDALL T. ENG** for his promotion to Administrative Judge, Supreme Court of Queens County, Criminal Term.

## ANITA E. BULLOCK-STALLINGS WAS RECENTLY APPOINTED ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHIEF CLERK OF THE RED HOOK COMMUNITY COURT



ANITA E. BULLOCK-STALLINGS

**ANITA E. BULLOCK-STALLINGS, better known as “Toni”, joined the NYS Unified Court System in 1983 as a Court Officer assigned to Brooklyn Criminal Court.**

Three years later, she was promoted to Senior Court Clerk, and worked in both Manhattan and Brooklyn Criminal Courts before becoming the Deputy Director for the Brooklyn Criminal Court Dispute Referral Center in 1991. In 1995, she teamed up with Detective Barn Marquis and they formed the Committee on Domestic Violence which became the Kings County DA's Domestic Violence Task Force. In 1997, Toni was promoted to the position of Borough Director for the Queens Criminal Court CDRC. In addition to her regular duties in the court, she conducted presentations about the courts, mediation, and domestic violence for schools, PTAs and youth groups. She also participated in panels on domestic violence, elder abuse and mediation. In 2001, Toni received a Quality Service Leadership Award. Toni collaborated with Karen Whitney, of Professional Development, to write and facilitate a program on managing challenges in the workplace. She was also a facilitator for the Facilitating Access to Justice program.

## Major Luz G. Bryan, Brooklyn Supreme Court, Civil Term



MAJOR  
LUZ G. BRYAN

**MAJOR LUZ G. BRYAN began her career as a court officer more than 21 years ago at Brooklyn Criminal Court.**

She describes her career as “exciting” from the early days of high profile cases such as the Bensonhurst trial to her current tenure in charge of security. She is a recipient of the

Franklin H. Williams Commission on Minority “Diversity Award.” She has also been recognized by the New York City Police Department, the Kings County District Attorneys Office, the Supreme Court Officers Association and many other organizations. Major Bryan is currently President of the Cervantes

Society. She is also a member of the Gender Bias Committee.

**Major Bryan's biggest role model is her father.** He instilled in her that she had no boundaries and could be whatever she wanted to be and do whatever she wanted to do. She attributes his strength and her mother's passion to her success.

**Major Bryan is the proud mother of three children,** Lorenzo Jr., Christina who attends the University of Delaware and Michael who will graduate next year from West Chester University in Pennsylvania. She is blessed with a supportive husband, Lorenzo, a former court officer who is now an attorney.

**NATIONAL CONSORTIUM  
BOARD MEMBERS WITH JUDGE KAYE**



**FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS  
JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MINORITIES  
MEMBERS WITH JUDGE KAYE**





*Pictured from left to right: Hon. Ariel E. Belen, Vice-Chair; Hon. Charles J. Tejada; Hon. Rose H. Sconiers; Felix C. Fernandez; Hon. Eduardo Padro; Joyce Y. Hartsfield; Hon. Lewis L. Douglass, Chair; Rene Myatt, Esq.; Hon. yvonne lewis; William H. Etheridge; Hon. Richard B. Lowe III and Karlene Dennis. Not pictured: Pamela D. Hayes, Esq.; Lenore Kramer, Esq.; Hon. Doris Ling-Cohan; Dr. Maria Ramirez and Hon. Troy K. Webber.*

**OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION**  
**Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities**  
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**COMMISSION MEMBERS**

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