



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

Contact:
Mary Lynn Nicolas-Brewster
mbrewst@nycourts.gov

Mary Lynn Nicolas-Brewster
Executive Director
Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission

www.nycourts.gov/press

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Curriculum Resources for Middle and High School Teachers and Students Explore Equal Justice, Other Themes Featured in Franklin H. Williams Commission’s Award-Winning Documentary

NEW YORK—The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission today announced the launch of digital curriculum resources for middle school through high school educators and students to complement its award-winning documentary, “A Bridge to Justice: The Life of Franklin H. Williams,” examining the life of the trailblazing attorney, civil rights leader and Commission’s namesake.

The Commission, which is dedicated to promoting racial and ethnic fairness in the New York State courts, worked with the Court System and WNED PBS, Buffalo’s PBS station, among others, to produce the documentary, with WNED PBS using clips from the documentary to develop the educational materials, carefully adhering to the New York State K-12 Social Studies Framework and the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies.

In addition to lesson plans for classroom settings in grades 7 through 12, a discussion guide was created to educate high school students and community members about

Franklin Williams' lifelong pursuit of equal justice, including his impact as the first chair of a New York State judicial commission dedicated to racial fairness.

The lesson plans and discussion guide explore many of the themes featured in the documentary, such as the importance of civic engagement, the integral role of our courts in protecting our civil rights and liberties, and the importance of efforts to address racial and other inequities within the courts and justice system, including initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion on the bench, in the courts' workforce and in the legal profession. Along with generating dialogue on these timely issues, the curriculum resources were designed to spur young people's civic participation and interest in the law—including careers in the law and justice system—and in the pursuit of equal justice.

“Reaching educators and students across New York and the country, these new online educational materials will help ensure that the legacy of Franklin Williams lives on, serving to inspire young people to actively engage in civic life and pursue careers dedicated to advancing equal justice,” said Commission Co-Chairs, Hon. Troy K. Webber, Associate Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department, and Hon. Richard Rivera, who sits on the Albany County Family Court bench. “We are thankful to Senior Vice President David Rotterman, Director of Education and Outreach Beth Fronckowiak, and Education & Community Outreach Specialist Samantha Kittinger of WNED Buffalo-Toronto Public Media for their support and expertise, to our Commission member, attorney Francis Letro of the Letro Law Firm, for helping establish the Commission's fruitful partnership with WNED PBS, and to the Commission's executive director, Mary Lynn Nicolas-Brewster, for her coordination of this endeavor and her unwavering commitment to the Commission's work.”

The curriculum resources are available on the WNED PBS website at www.wned.org/franklinwilliams. The resources are also available on the PBS LearningMedia platform, (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/a-bridge-to-justice-the-life-of-franklin-h-williams>), which has a national reach of 1.8 million educators and over 30 million students.