Conference Mission Statement – 3.21.2012

Profound racial disparities exist in the American criminal justice system and concrete reform is needed to address them. The New York County Lawyers' Association, Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, and Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions will co-sponsor a conference on how to remedy these racial inequalities in the criminal justice system. The conference will convene for 1 ½ -2 days, starting on October 17, 2012. The goal of the conference is to assemble a distinguished group of participants in the criminal justice system—prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, scholars, community leaders, law enforcement officials, and formerly incarcerated advocates—who will collaborate to develop a menu of practical reforms.

The participants will bring their varying perspectives and experience to identify systematically the critical points of intervention for reducing racial disparity and its collateral consequences at different stages of criminal proceedings from arraignments through sentencing. The conference's emphasis is on developing specific reforms. The conference report's findings and recommendations will be widely disseminated and are also expected to be published in an academic journal.

Although the concentration will be on the criminal justice system in New York City, the report and reform recommendations of the conference will have national and state-wide implications. The national participants will share their expertise about evidence-based solutions that have proven effective in other jurisdictions. Rather than focusing on what has gone wrong and what has not worked, conference participants will focus on how to create a criminal justice system where race is reduced as a negative factor.