



PRESS RELEASE: New Report, Building the Table: Advancing Race Equity in the Criminal Legal System, Released

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JustLeadershipUSA and Association of Prosecuting Attorneys Collaborate to Issue Historic Report on Advancing Race Equity in the Criminal Legal System

Washington, DC - February 14, 2023 - JustLeadershipUSA and the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA) released a new report, *Building the Table: Advancing Race Equity in the Criminal Legal System*, which provides a historic roadmap of strategies to advance race equity in the criminal legal system.

The report's findings are the result of an unprecedented convening between representatives from all components of the justice system alongside community members, in particular those with lived experience, their families, and survivors of crime. This collaboration builds a foundation for policies that will successfully advance race equity, improve our approach to justice, and promote community safety and well-being.

“As people who are directly impacted and hurt by the criminal legal system, it is extremely important that our voices and leadership are a core part of any transformation that impacts our lives and those of our communities,” said DeAnna Hoskins, president and CEO of JustLeadershipUSA. “True authentic engagement is more than seeking our support at the end of systematic redesign, it occurs when the concepts of reimagining are led by those most affected, because our experience *is* our expertise. Our leadership as we ‘Build the Table’ is critical to advancing race equity and improving the system’s capacity to administer justice and promote community safety and well-being.”

This report and initiative were made possible through the support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the efforts of those who volunteered their time and insights to produce this document.

“As we strive to advance racial and ethnic equity in the criminal justice system, it is critical that we elevate the leadership role of people with lived experience to ensure that their first-hand perspectives shape the creation of effective and meaningful solutions,” said Laurie Garduque, director of criminal justice at the MacArthur Foundation. “This report offers a framework for communities looking to advance community safety and wellbeing, and it starts with authentic community engagement and acknowledging the expertise of people with lived experience.”

This report is intended to equip federal, state and local legal system stakeholders to pursue new approaches to building stronger relationships with communities and the broader legal system. This consensus contains a unified statement of principles, policies and practical guidance to advance race equity in the criminal legal system, as well as recent real-world examples of policies and practices implemented by a variety of system stakeholders and community organizations throughout the country.

“Authentic community engagement requires forging trust between system stakeholders and communities, centering persons directly impacted by the criminal legal system in system decision making, and empowering them to act as equal partners in the shaping of policies and practices so that the system can fully meet the needs of communities, treat all persons equitably and with dignity, and realize greater justice, fairness, and safety for all,” said David LaBahn, APA president and CEO.

The strategies and recommendations presented fall into three broad categories of action agreed upon by all convening participants:

- Coordinate action across system stakeholders and communities
- Stakeholders must prioritize authentic community engagement by recognizing the community perspectives as expert and akin to the professional experience of system stakeholders.
- Invest in communities and systems to empower them to pursue equity
- Jurisdictions must invest in systems stakeholders and community organizations that provide vital services to communities, victims of crime and justice-involved persons to ensure that adequate time and resources are dedicated to improve equity without compromising the other essential functions of the criminal legal system.
- Link decision-making to desired community-level outcomes
- Progression through the legal system should only be exercised if it meets the desired individual- and community-level outcomes of safety, justice and well-being.

APA and JustLeadershipUSA encourage justice-minded community members and stakeholders to join the coalition and begin implementing these strategies in their own jurisdictions.

The full report can be read [\[HERE\]](#)

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