

Remarks by Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald

NAACP After the March "A Virtual Town Hall"

June 6, 2020

Thank you Alphonso and Kristen, and mahalo to the Honolulu NAACP for organizing this virtual town hall.

Like everyone else here today, I watched the images of George Floyd's death with horror and dismay. For those of us who work in our justice system, which ascribes to the principle of equal justice for all, this is a time of reckoning. We need to listen to the voices that have been raised across our nation, and take action to address the deeply rooted and systematic problems that exist in our institutions.

This is not just an issue for the mainland: one study showed that in Hawai'i, a black person is more than twice as likely to be imprisoned as a white person.¹ So we have a lot of work to do, and this will be a long and sometimes difficult conversation.

But, it's a conversation that has already started on many different fronts. We have taken some important steps recently in Hawai'i, through reforming bail and other aspects of our criminal justice system, through training our judges and judiciary staff on how to recognize and address implicit bias, and through increasing access to our civil justice system.

Hawai'i's judiciary is committed to doing what is right, and we want to listen to our community. So mahalo to the NAACP, and all of our panelists and everyone who is participating today, for giving us this opportunity.

¹ Ashley Nellis, [The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons](https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons/), The Sentencing Project (June 14, 2016), <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons/>