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ClassACT

Achieving Change Together

March 2021 ClassACTions Newsletter

#CLASSACTFORUM

Racism and the Criminal System: Communities Fight for Justice

Thursday, March 25, 7-8:30pm ET

[Click here to register](#)



Sylvester Monroe '73
Moderator
Author, Journalist
[@sylvestermonroe](#)



Gina Clayton-Johnson
Executive Director & Founder
Essie Justice Group
[@essie4justice](#)



Rick Jones
Executive Director and
a founding member of the
Neighborhood Defender Service (NDS).
[@NeighborhoodDef](#)



Christy E. Lopez
Professor from Practice at Georgetown Law and
co-leads the Innovative Policing Program (IPP)
at Georgetown Law
[@Christy_E_Lopez](#)



Jason Williams
District Attorney of New Orleans
[@Orleansparishda](#)
[@brunwithjason](#)

ClassACT, as part of its Justice & Civic Engagement Initiative, hosts this examination of one of the hot-button issues of our time: understanding racism in the criminal system and ending mass incarceration and police

abuse of BIPOC communities. The panel has voices deeply familiar with community activism, prosecution, policing and public defense. Panelists include **Rick Jones**, Executive Director of JusticeAid's 2021 grantee partner, NDS PACE; **Gina Clayton-Johnson**, Executive Director & Founder, Essie Justice Group (JusticeAid grantee partner in 2018); **Christy E. Lopez**, Law Professor, co-leader of the Innovative Policing Program at Georgetown Law; and **Jason Williams**, newly elected Orleans Parish District Attorney and former City Council President, New Orleans, La. Classmate **Sylvester Monroe**, former Washington Post journalist and author, will serve as the moderator.

Each year, [JusticeAid](#), a ClassACT multi-year sustained collaborative partner, shines a spotlight on timely issues related to civil and human rights. "Following the events of 2020, police accountability and community empowerment demand a national conversation," explains JusticeAid co-Founder & CEO, our classmate, **Steve Milliken**. "This year we are raising money to support the expansion of NDS PACE, which is working on the front lines to address these issues."

To prepare our audience for this important conversation, we reached out to Steve, who connected us to **Rick Jones**, who heads the [NDS PACE](#) program (Police Accountability/Community Empowerment). Classmate **Dick Friedman** interviewed him for this article.



Rick Jones

Rick promises that attendees will get a thorough look at the state of justice—and injustice. “This is an opportunity for folks to hear from a good mix of people all along the spectrum of the criminal legal system,” he says. “It’s an opportunity to do a deep dive on the state of policing in America, and also a way to understand how communities can take a more proactive role and be empowered in terms of self-determination and figuring out how they want to have public safety operate in their communities, all of which are the hallmarks of the NDS PACE program.”

Jones sees JusticeAid’s support of NDS PACE as a worthy follow-up to JusticeAid’s focus on voter suppression in 2020. “JusticeAid was right on the money last year to be supporting election protection,” he says. “To see how dramatically important that protection was, particularly in a place like Georgia—we’re already seeing the manifestations of this.” He also points to how 2020 “really changed the landscape in lots of different ways. It really underscored the inequities, the disparities, the injustices. If you look at the communities that were the most heavily impacted by COVID, they were primarily communities of color and communities that were poor. The year 2020 and the pandemic really put a spotlight on the injustices of our society and of the legal system.”

In fact, there was a synergistic effect—a deadly one. Says Jones: “If you’re arrested and you’re poor and you’re black, the likelihood is that you’re going to have bail set on you and the likelihood is that you’re going to be unable to make that bail. Because of the situations in jail and your inability to protect yourself from that virus, it might very well be a death sentence. So we really began thinking about the business of compassionate release, how to safely take people out of the prisons and prevent prisons from being super spreader sites.”

With this year’s initiative, JusticeAid is returning to its roots in public defense. “NDS has always been about realizing and maximizing the underutilized and undervalued power of public defenders,” says Jones. “I think we have a different landscape now. You wouldn’t have the problems we have now if you had a strong and robust public defense program from the beginning. Prosecutors and police have been able to roam unfiltered and unfettered. Now with the NDS PACE program, we can try dismantling those systems in our society that perpetuate these inequalities.”

What does Jones seek from ClassACT? “Time and treasure!” He responds.

“For us to be successful, we need to have the resources. This is a 10-year, \$10 million enterprise. Plus, we need people who have particular connections and specific talents—[especially] those who can help us strategize and plan.”

#CLASSACTFORUM IN MAY 2021

Health Disparities and the Vaccine

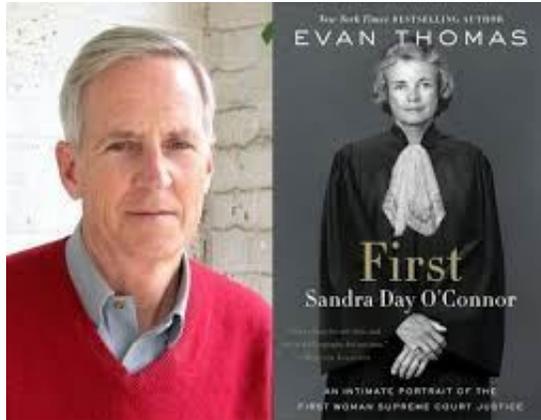


From bbc.com

Our May forum follows two successful and well-attended forums in 2020 - one that focused on the differential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on populations internationally, and the second on the impact of disease on racial and ethnic groups and among underserved populations across the United States. The pandemic has revealed new and exacerbated existing health disparities in the United States and worldwide. This forum will explore how pharmaceutical companies and advocates for health disparities communities are addressing disparities through their approach to vaccine development and testing, and what pharmaceutical companies can do to continue to address COVID-related disparities as the vaccine roll-out continues and the virus and patterns of infection and disease change.

We will announce the date, the moderators and the panelists in our April Bulletin, so check back then.

ALL RISE FOR JUSTICE O'CONNOR



[Watch the full video here](#)

ClassACT was especially proud to be one of the co-sponsors for a live-and-Zoom session emanating from Minneapolis' Temple Israel on February 22. That's because two of our classmates, Twin Cities attorney **Cliff Greene** and author **Evan Thomas**, were the catalysts for this entertaining civics lesson centering on the life and legacy of Sandra Day O'Connor, the Supreme Court's first female justice and the subject of Evan's critically acclaimed New York Times bestseller (written with his wife, Osceola), "First: Sandra Day O'Connor."

Says Cliff: "I'd read the book and visited with Evan and Oscie at their home in D.C. to express my rave reviews in person. Sometime later, I was asked to help design a program that would provide common ground for folks of different political perspectives to learn and possibly be inspired by someone all could admire. I also wanted this audience to meet judicial 'Firsts' from Minnesota who themselves were trailblazers. The judiciary is sometimes a big unknown to non-lawyers. I wanted to introduce judges in person or through surrogates to a lay audience. They too were pioneers. And they may have been appointed by governors or Presidents of differing political persuasions. But these judges are public servants who take their jobs—and their status as firsts—seriously. Evan and Oscie liked the idea when I suggested it to them, and graciously donated their time for this project."

At least 250 people “attended” the session, with some screens being shared by multiple viewers as it took place. More have since seen the link, which is [here](#). Evan and Oscie’s book is available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or at bookstores everywhere.

THE FORCE IS WITH THEM



[Click here for SACP 2020 Annual Report](#)

Classmate **Bobby “Dean” Clayton** has announced that among its new University advisors, the Sports Analytics Club Program (SACP) has enlisted four faculty members from the Department of Mathematics at the U.S. Air Force Academy. The quartet was appointed by Academy Superintendent Lt. General Richard Clark.

SACP is a ClassACT Sustained Collaboration whose aim is advancing data science and career development through sports analytics, especially in under-resourced schools. “No child should be disconnected from learning and every child deserves an exciting learning experience,” says Clayton, SACP’s founder and CEO. Individual programs have been established at 12 schools serving 180 students in eight states. Among the initiatives is one being conducted by the Sports Analytics Club at Boston’s Jeremiah E. Burke High School: using statistics to create a performance portfolio making the case that Reggie Lewis, the late Northeastern (and Boston Celtics) great, merits induction into the

National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame Class of 2022.

To see the 2020 SACP Annual Report, click [HERE](#).

FIND CLASSMATES ON OUR DIRECTORY AND MAP VIEW



Classmates around Boston, MA

Haven't been to the ClassACT HR73 website recently? We have made some changes that we think you will like. Check out the classmate map tool that enables you to find classmates across the country.

To find classmates by state, make sure you're logged in, then go to the advanced search in the [classmate directory](#) and use the 2 character state code to find classmates. Or, click for the [map view](#) to find a classmate's name.

To find the map view on the website, first log in, then go to our homepage, click on the Get Involved tab, then on Class Connect, and then on **Find a Classmate** to search for specific classmates and on **View Classmates** to search via the map. Just one of the many reasons to visit the ClassACT HR73 website. Watch for more useful tips in future communications.

This tool is only available to HR73 classmates who have registered on the ClassACT website, so make sure you do so [here](#).

Interested in helping ClassACT?

ClassACT is built on classmate participation and we are interested in having every classmate as a member of our ClassACT community. If you are interested in learning more about ClassACT and how you can be involved, please visit our [website](#) or send us an [email](#).

While encouraging the sharing of time and willingness to work together, ClassACT also welcomes financial support. To support our work in this way you can donate below.

[Donate Here](#)

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[Class Achieving Change Together \(Class ACT\), Inc.](#)

