

## EQUAL JUSTICE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVE

The Atlanta Bar Association has a longstanding tradition of leadership in promoting the fair administration of justice in our community. As set forth by President Franklin at the Annual Meeting in May of 2015, the Equal Justice In Law Enforcement (“EJLE”) Initiative serves to engage the legal community and key stakeholders (citizens and the law enforcement community) in a focused collaborative effort to help prevent and lessen the prospect of law enforcement shootings (and/or the use of excessive force) involving non-violent unarmed citizens.

The Atlanta Bar’s historic work to support the cause of justice has and continues to acknowledge that law enforcement officers play a critical role in upholding the rule of law and ensuring public safety. In 1980, this organization erected a memorial in Woodruff Park to the police officers lost in the line of duty and our Atlanta Bar Foundation supports educational scholarships for the children of fallen officers.

Recent documented violence across the country from shootings and other deadly force involving law enforcement and unarmed non-violent citizens is deeply disturbing. Modern technology has exposed what should never happen in our great nation. Current incidents highlight a fundamental failing in the fair and equal administration of justice and demonstrate the critical need for meaningful dialogue and a focused search for solutions to prevent or lessen the likelihood of the continuation of such tragedies. By their very nature, such incidents undermine confidence in our system of justice, destroy the critical bond between the brave men and women charged with protecting the community and those being protected, and profoundly contradict our nation’s ideals.

Members of the Atlanta Bar have long advanced the organization’s legacy of service to others and the pursuit of the cause of justice. By lawyers joining together to lead using their particular knowledge of the intricacies of the law, they can help heal society by promoting the fair resolution of disputes, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring that all citizens are afforded their constitutional rights. The leadership of lawyers can make a profound difference, as the law enforcement community relies on our advice and counsel to help them implement the law and citizens rely on us to make them aware of and help enforce their rights.

The EJLE Initiative brings together the law enforcement community, the prosecutorial and defense bars, former offenders and the public by further engaging the legal community to provide additional resources to lessen the potential for discriminatory policing practices and uphold

the civil and constitutional rights of every citizen, while also supporting the outstanding work, dedication, and sacrifice of our law enforcement community.

### **The EJLE Initiative consists of two phases: (1) EJLE Task Force:**

Primarily comprised of members of the bar directly involved in the criminal justice system (prosecution and defense), law enforcement leadership, law school academicians, former offenders, community and civic leaders and stakeholders, the EJLE Task Force will: 1) study and evaluate the various perspectives and problematic issues that have led to negative or deadly law enforcement/citizen encounters; and 2) engage volunteer members of the bar in facilitating the dissemination of enhancements to law enforcement training and educational outreach to the affected communities (including a specific outreach effort to local high school students) on measures designed to help prevent unwarranted negative or deadly law enforcement/citizen encounters. The training and educational outreach will consist of a community forum and/ or panel discussion(s) in the Fall of 2015 and/or Spring of 2016 at the Georgia State University College of Law and a larger bar-wide program featuring a keynote speaker in the Spring of 2016.

### **(2) EJLE Volunteer Recruitment Partnership with Georgia Appleseed:**

The Atlanta Bar, as part of its EJLE Initiative, has partnered with Georgia Appleseed on its “*Race, Law Enforcement and The Law Project*” by recruiting volunteer attorneys. Attorney volunteers, after receiving training through Georgia Appleseed, conduct interviews and seek the views of leaders and community members to help assess the nature of law enforcement and community relations. Georgia Appleseed will prepare a comprehensive report and is committed to an objective, data driven assessment, a deep respect for the important service that law enforcement personnel provide to our society, and an abiding belief that all of Georgia’s citizens must be afforded the rights to which they are entitled under the federal and state constitutions.

1To obtain data, the EJLE Task Force utilizes reports generated primarily by Georgia Appleseed, in addition to other data sources, such as Citizens’ Review Panels, local law schools, and various news media resources. Open Records Requests may also be used to obtain information. The data will serve to guide the EJLE Task Force in identifying solutions and convening panel discussions and/or community forums designed to educate the community and foster collaboration with law enforcement leadership on best practices designed to ensure public safety and the protection of the civil and human rights of all citizens.

2 This aspect of the EJLE Initiative focuses on providing training by recognized authorities and/or law enforcement trainers in order to effectively disseminate suggestions and information regarding how to handle police/citizen encounters. Attorneys and bar members will facilitate meetings at local schools to provide training to the public.