



For Release: Monday, November 23, 2020

Contact:

- **Justin Terrell**, MNJRC Executive Director: justin@mnjrc.org; 612-432-2141
- **Andrew Martens**, MNJRC Board Chair: andrew.martens@thomsonreuters.com; 651-271-6985

**Minnesota Justice Research Center's 2020 Re-Imagining Justice Conference
Paves Path To Transform Minnesota's Criminal Justice System**

Governor Tim Walz and Professor John A. Powell keynote conference; MNJRC founder and former Hennepin County Attorney Tom Johnson honored

Roseville, Minnesota: The Minnesota Justice Research Center held its annual Re-Imagining Justice Conference last week, bringing together criminal justice practitioners, legal experts, scholars, law enforcement, and advocates to re-imagine a justice system that functions more effectively, humanely, and with the public's trust. This year's conference included six plenary sessions and eight breakout panels, centering powerful conversations to identify the path forward to transform Minnesota's justice system.

Day one included Minnesota Governor Tim Walz who spoke to the importance of continuing to perfect the justice system so that it

Day one also included conversations on Ramsey County's Bail Reform Project, the financial impacts of the justice system on low-income people, the impact of the justice system on young people and re-imagining policing, which was facilitated by Dr. Tracie Keese, the Senior Vice President of Justice Initiatives and Co-Founder of the Center for Policing Equity (CPE).

Then put some quotes here pulled from twitter.....

Day one of the conference wrapped up with a panel discussion with legislators and policy leaders on the politics of reform and opportunities to move the conversation forward during the upcoming legislative session.

Quotes from attendees here....

Day two of the conference started with a tribute to MNJRC founder and former Hennepin County Attorney Tom Johnson, who passed away in June after a six year battle with cancer.

MNJRC Board Member Mark Haase facilitated a conversation with people who knew Tom well. US Senator Amy Klobuchar, a long-time friend and neighbor of Tom, shared her tribute to Tom via a video.

Quote here....

The Opening Plenary addressed the critical issue of providing stable and affordable housing to community members returning from prison. St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter led a conversation about recent efforts in his city.

Day two's breakout panels addressed the issues of restoring voting rights to previously incarcerated people facilitated by Rep. Rena Moran (DFL-St. Paul); re-imagining services in prison, and re-imagining the role of the prosecutor to be more of an ally with the community, facilitated by former US Attorney and MNJRC Board Member Tom Heffelfinger.

Quotes. Might need to add bit about the poll data session

Day two's sessions were topped off with a keynote address by jon a. powell, the Director of the Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley, and a fireside chat with he and MNJRC Board Member, Vice President of Government Affairs and Community Relations for Thomson Reuters, and former mayor of Minneapolis Sharon Sayles Belton.

Quotes from twitter here.

MNJRC Executive Director Justin Terrell closed out the conference, calling for an on-going commitment to do this work...

Quotes here.

Here is the language of the pre-conference press release, if it is useful:

This year's Re-Imagining Justice Conference will include a tribute to Tom Johnson, former Hennepin County Attorney and MNJRC founder, to include comments from U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar. Tom passed away in June 2020 after a six-year battle with cancer. Tom dedicated his life to addressing racial disparities in the criminal justice system. "MNJRC is just one of many legacies that Tom left behind," said Mark Haase, MNJRC Board Member. "We are grateful for his commitment to this work and will continue to carry it on as we keep working to transform our justice system."

"Recent events in our state -- indeed, the nation as a whole -- lay bare the racial disparities in our society. There is an urgent need to wrestle with the reality we're facing, put a human face on the data, and design reforms with impacted communities at the center," said Justin Terrell, MNJRC's Executive Director.

Sharon Sayles Belton, , and MNJRC Board Member explained, "the killing of George Floyd has sparked outrage and movements for justice around the world. It's time now for Minnesota to move from being a spark for outrage to becoming an example for meaningful transformation of our justice system to become one that is more humane and holds the trust of the community."

"This year's Re-Imagining Justice Conference will be a place where people with different perspectives will come together to expand the ideas of what is possible," Tom Heffelfinger, former U.S. Attorney and MNJRC Board Member.

The Re-Imagining Justice Conference will be held virtually on Wednesday, November 18 and Thursday, November 19 from 8:00 am - 1:00 pm. Tickets are \$50 for General Admission, \$125 for CLE tickets, and \$60 for POST Board Continuing Education credits. Limited scholarships and discounted rates for public agency lawyers are also available by emailing MNJRC at info@mnjrc.org. Registration is available on eventbrite at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/re-imagining-justice-conference-2020-tickets-123947176341>

For further information, please email info@mnjrc.org.

-30-

More on the Minnesota Justice Research Center:

The Minnesota Justice Research Center is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization established in 2017 to improve the justice system through high quality research, policy development, and education. Its overarching goal is to facilitate the transformation of the justice system in Minnesota so that it is effective, humane, and operates with a high level of public trust.

MNJRC's Mission: *Through research, education, and policy development, we give our community the information and tools needed to create a criminal justice system that aligns with our commonly-held values.*

MNJRC's Statement of Values: *We are nonpartisan and seek to be broadly inclusive in our definition of community. We strive for honesty and transparency when it comes to the values and goals guiding our work, and never compromise our research for any predetermined agenda.*