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# Women of Color in the Courts

The emerging role of women of color as leaders and managers in California courts was the focus of a two-day conference held in conjunction with the California Continuing Judicial Studies Program in May. The statewide conference, titled "The New Millennium: Women of Color as Court Leaders and Managers," was presented by the Judicial Council's Access and Fairness Advisory Committee in association with the California Center for Judicial Education and Research. It offered a unique opportunity for women of color and other interested individuals to come together to discuss this issue and explore what they can do to facilitate change.

More than 80 individuals attended the conference, including judges, court administrators, court managers and staff, Administrative Office of the Courts staff, and law school representatives. The participants explored how to identify, as well as how to develop strategies for responding to, the stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination that affect women of color. They examined approaches for the recruitment, selection, promotion, and retention of women of color. In addition, the conference addressed the impacts of institutional racism and sexism on women of color.

Based on the success of the conference and on positive feedback from attendees, the Women of Color Subcommittee of the Access and Fairness Advisory Committee is exploring the possibility of conducting a national conference within the next two years. At a minimum, if the national conference does not materialize, the subcommittee will hold another conference in northern California.

The subcommittee is drafting a report of the May conference that will be posted on the advisory committee home page at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/access/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/access/). It is also examining ways, such as an electronic bulletin board, for conference participants and other interested parties from the courts and the public to keep in contact.

● For more information, contact Clifford Alumno, 415-865-7683; e-mail: [clifford.alumno@jud.ca.gov](mailto:clifford.alumno@jud.ca.gov).



Luncheon speaker Senator Martha Escutia addresses the challenges facing women of color.