

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 21, 2021

**Policing in Communities of Color**

(Greenwood Village, CO)

On October 6, 2021 online at 7 p.m., former state representative Penfield Tate will moderate a public conversation with Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition Deputy Director Juston Cooper, former Independent Monitor of the Denver Police and Sheriff Departments Nicholas Mitchell, civil rights attorney Qusair Mohamedbhai, and Aurora Police Chief Vanessa Wilson. The conversation will include live Q & A with online participants on Colorado Humanities and its partners' Facebook pages and YouTube channels. We'll talk about the past, present, and future issues surrounding policing and public safety in communities of color and explore how to work together to enhance public safety.

**Penfield W. Tate III**

Attorney, former Colorado state representative

Founder of Tate Law serving individuals, businesses, and government agencies, Penfield was an aide to former Denver Mayor Federico Peña, in the cabinet of former Colorado Governor Roy Romer as Executive Director of the Department of Administration, and spent over six years in the Colorado General Assembly — four years in the House as the State Representative for District 8, and over two years in the Senate as the State Senator for District 33. Penfield is the founder of Tate Law, and his client-centered, problem-solving approach to his nearly 40-year practice focuses on serving governments in public finance and municipal law and people in corporate and business matters, such as wills, estates, trusts, and wealth preservation.

**Nicholas E. Mitchell**

Independent Monitor (of Denver Police and Sheriff Departments 2012-2021)

Nick is currently the court-appointed monitor of a Department of Justice consent decree with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Between 2012 and 2021, Nick was the Independent Monitor of the Denver Police and Sheriff Departments and oversaw all internal investigations into Denver's approximately 2,300 sworn police officers and sheriff deputies. He received awards from the Denver Bar Association and the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement, and has been recognized as an expert on civilian oversight and law enforcement reform on CNN, in *The New Yorker*, and other national publications. Nick is a graduate of Fordham Law School and is a former Gates Foundation Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He was previously a member of the Board of Governors of the Colorado Bar Association and the Board of Directors of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement.

**Juston L. Cooper, M.P.A.**

Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition Deputy Director

Juston Cooper graduated from Denver public schools in 1996, and holds a Bachelor's of Science in Business Marketing from Metropolitan State University and a Master's in Public Administration from the University of Colorado at Denver. His varied career working on social justice issues through political engagement, public policy, strategic planning, organizational development, coalition building, and grassroots organizing has helped to build and implement public health and safety strategies that address criminal and juvenile justice reform. Justin asserts that it's essential to build and mobilize political power in community in order to truly provide health and safety. He believes that in order to reconcile the harm done to communities by systems of oppression, we must understand the systemic issues and barriers oppressed communities face.

**Qusair Mohamedbhai**

Civil Rights Attorney

Qusair is a partner at Rathod | Mohamedbhai law firm. His practice is exclusively in the areas of plaintiff's employment discrimination and constitutional civil rights litigation. He advocates for the rights of employees in the workplace, and for the civil rights of all individuals against governmental and institutional abuses of power. His awards include the Sam Cary Bar Association – Warrior for Justice award (2018), Lawyer of the Year - Law Week Colorado (2017), and Colorado LGBT Bar Association Ally of the Year (2017). He teaches (National Institute for Trial Advocacy, University of Denver Sturm College of Law and others) and publishes on civil rights issues in addition to representing his clients, most notably *The Estate of Elijah Javon McClain, et al. v. City of Aurora, et al. (Police Violence Causing Death)* in 2019.

**Vanessa Wilson**

Aurora Chief of Police

Vanessa Wilson was sworn in as the 14th Chief of Police for the city of Aurora, Colorado on August 17th, 2020, and is the first woman to serve as Chief. She joined the Aurora Police Department on December 30, 1996, as a Patrol Officer. She served as the Interim Chief of Police starting on January 1, 2020. Chief Wilson earned a Bachelor's of Arts, from the University of Wyoming, and in 2019 graduated from FBI National Academy Class #275. Highlights of her career include the establishment of the Aurora Police Department's first Domestic Violence Unit, scheduled to become fully operational this year. Chief Wilson was also recently selected to be a member of the FBI's National Executive Institute Association of key Federal, state, and local chief executives of the largest law enforcement agencies throughout the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Europe.

This program is the sixth in the collaborative Changing the Legacy of Race and Ethnicity – Conversations for One America series presented by Colorado Humanities and many partners to encourage understanding and discussion about the legacy of race and ethnicity in America. Conversations examine causes for current situations and offer ways to make changes now for a more just future. This program was inspired by summer 2020 events, when several violent acts of racism sparked an awakening in America and the streets were filled with passionate advocates who demanded the end of police brutality and systemic racism. **Learn more or register at [coloradohumanities.org](https://coloradohumanities.org) or 303.894.7951.**

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For photos of panelists, interviews, or more information, please contact Josephine Jones at 702.489.7188 (cell) or [jones@coloradohumanities.org](mailto:jones@coloradohumanities.org).