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## Introduction to the Report and Recommendations of the Florida Supreme Court Racial and Ethnic Bias Study Commission

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INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FLORIDA SUPREME  
COURT RACIAL AND ETHNIC BIAS STUDY  
COMMISSION

LEANDER J. SHAW, JR.\*

I am pleased to introduce the *Report and Recommendations of the Florida Supreme Court Racial and Ethnic Bias Study Commission*. This document is the product of two years of study. Volume I, which is reprinted in the following pages, was submitted to the court on December 11, 1990. Volume II was submitted one year later.

The Study Commission was composed of community leaders and professionals of varied backgrounds. One of its most important methods was to conduct public hearings to gain information and to learn the experiences and insights of people from all walks of life. The Commission also used a variety of sources of scholarship and social science research, which were gathered, assembled, and analyzed by its small but able professional staff. The Commission's findings are supported by strong documentation and well-reasoned analysis.

The initial work of the Commission has already yielded concrete results in the form of statutory changes enacted by the 1991 Legislature and various policy initiatives in the executive and judicial branches. It is hoped that the second volume will be as well-received as the first and will bring forth further needed improvements in the practices of the criminal justice system and the court system generally.

The special role of the judiciary in our system of government is such that there is an imperative need for impartiality and the perception of impartiality. The legitimacy of courts as arbiters of disputes demands no less. In order for the rulings of the court system to be perceived as just, the process of adjudication must be free from the taint of bias. There is much that remains to be done to improve our courts' performance in this regard.

Volume I of the Report, as set forth in this issue, addresses the status, experiences, and treatment of racial and ethnic minorities in the court system and offers recommendations in the areas of: (1) the judicial system workforce, (2) the interaction of law enforcement agencies with minority groups, and (3) the juvenile justice system. Volume II, the Commission's second Report dated December 11, 1991, addresses similar concerns with respect to: (1) the adult criminal

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justice system, (2) minority women in the judicial system, and (3) minorities in the legal profession.

As I invite readers to examine the Report and Recommendations, I would like to give a heartfelt commendation to the Chair, members, and staff of the Commission for their dedication and hard work on behalf of this project. I also thank the *Florida State University Law Review* for republishing the Report, thereby promoting its dissemination to a wider audience. It is my sincere hope that knowledge of the Report and Recommendations will help to bring about needed improvements so that the judicial system can better work for all of us.