



NEWS RELEASE –

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DENVER DA BETH MCCANN PROMOTES RENEWED COMMITMENT TO EQUAL APPLICATION OF JUSTICE

At an office-wide meeting today, Denver District Attorney Beth McCann provided all members of her office with copies of the book, *“The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness,”* by Michelle Alexander, a professor at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. The book highlights the racial dimensions of the War on Drugs, arguing that federal drug policy unfairly targets communities of color.

“My purpose in making this book available to our attorneys is to encourage a more encompassing discussion and thought as to who and how we prosecute lower-level crimes in our city,” McCann says.

McCann wants to ensure there is no explicit or implicit bias in her office, and hopefully stimulate examination as to whether there are implicit biases in the prosecution of cases—for example, whether, in bringing cases, defendants who are similarly charged are consciously or unconsciously treated differently, absent appropriate aggravating factors, because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender.

“Members of communities of color are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Many of our communities in Denver believe that they are unfairly targeted because of the color of their skin,” McCann says. “I ran for this office because I want to change that belief, real or perceived. I want to look at criminal justice through a wider lens than just how many convictions we win. I want to provide equal justice for all in our city. In administering justice we must also strive toward equal application of the law.”

DA McCann emphasizes, however, that equal justice and the equal application of the law does not mean turning a blind eye to crime. “Let me be clear, if there is a bad actor harming his or her own community or the community at large by criminal conduct, he or she should suffer the consequences,” McCann says. “The prosecutors, investigators and victim advocates of the Denver District Attorney’s Office take seriously their solemn mission to protect and promote public safety in Denver. That mission and commitment is unwavering.”

McCann also hopes to implement a system in the office to track data on race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and gender of defendants in order to learn where there may be implicit bias in the way the office handles cases.