

# NEWS RELEASE

**R. Andrew Murray**  
District Attorney

**October 20, 2015**

## **Mecklenburg prosecutors receive implicit bias training from national experts**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – At the direction of District Attorney Andrew Murray, Mecklenburg County prosecutors participated in a day-long training in which nationally-recognized experts helped them explore implicit biases and strategies to ensure that the prosecution of cases remains unaffected by factors such as race or socioeconomic status.

The District Attorney's Office welcomed law professors John A. Powell, Rachel Godsil and L. Song Richardson to lead the training session, which was mandatory for all Assistant District Attorneys, on October 19, 2015. Their presentation, titled "Why race is hard even when people are good: Lessons from the mind sciences on implicit bias and racial anxiety," described empirical research concerning implicit bias, as well as the history of racial disparity in the court system.

Research shows that everyone harbors implicit biases. These biases are often subconscious and unintentional but can affect a person's attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age and appearance. Professors Powell, Godsil and Richardson engaged in conversation with prosecutors about their work and introduced them to intervention methods that attorneys and law enforcement can use to not only identify personal biases but also reduce any effects of those biases on their work.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to have such renowned experts share their insights and strategies with my staff," says District Attorney Andrew Murray. "All of my prosecutors come from different walks of life, and they all have experiences that shape their outlooks and actions. As prosecutors, it is essential that we be able to set aside any biases, allowing us to follow the law and administer fair and equal justice to everyone in this community."

[John A. Powell](#) is an internationally recognized expert in the areas of civil rights and civil liberties and a wide range of issues including race, structural racism, ethnicity, housing, poverty and democracy. In addition to being a Professor of Law and Professor of African American Studies and Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, Professor Powell is the director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society and holds the Robert D. Haas Chancellor's Chair in Equity and Inclusion.

[Professor Godsil](#) is a professor at Seton Hall University School of Law. She is also a cofounder and director of research for the Perception Institute. She regularly provides trainings and lectures to a wide range of private and public institutions seeking to address the role of bias, and she has provided trainings on implicit bias to state judges across the country on behalf of the National Association of State Judges. Professor Godsil's prior experience includes service

as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York and as an Associate Counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

[L. Song Richardson](#) is a professor at the University of California, Irvine School of Law. Her interdisciplinary research uses lessons from cognitive and social psychology to study criminal procedure, criminal law and policing. Professor Richardson has conducted numerous trainings of judges, police, public defenders, prosecutors and others on issues related to the influence of implicit racial biases on decision-making. She has previously worked as a state and federal public defender in Seattle, Washington, and she was also an Assistant Counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

*Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit [www.charmeckda.com](http://www.charmeckda.com). For updates and other information, "like" the DA's Office on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/charmeckda](http://www.facebook.com/charmeckda) and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA.*

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