**Why You Should Join In This Project**

There is a wound in the American criminal justice system that members of the legal profession have a special duty to address. Too many of our nation’s citizens lack trust in our criminal justice system. As American Bar Association President Linda A. Klein has put it, "The lack of trust by citizens in our justice system is deeply troubling and we must find ways to rebuild that confidence so that our communities across our diverse country are stable and secure."

The ABA is of course uniquely positioned to help find solutions to this problem, even though the ABA cannot solve this problem on its own. Our many other state, local and affinity bar associations, however, also have the credibility and – more importantly – possess the local connections necessary to foster collaboration and compromise among those who are most directly affected in their communities.

The ABA thus calls upon all of us who share a love for our system of justice to get involved on a “grass roots” level. There is a critical need to educate the public and to provide the tools for communities to unite and to find a way to heal.

We can do this. As ABA President Klein has put it, “This won't be solved overnight, but I am confident that lawyers will dedicate their talents to this task and achieve what we all want: safe communities and a respect for the rule of law.”

This toolkit is intended to help you in that crucial work. It is our view that what is needed is dialogue and a change that is built on consensus. But consensus building is not an abstract exercise. It requires people to meet face to face. The dialogue must occur in legal conferences, continuing legal education panels and law school classes; in courthouses and legislative hearings; and in police stations, schools and community centers. Social media and other technological resources must also be employed to reach as many stakeholders as possible. This is where you can make an enormous difference in your community.