



**April 2006**  
**PRESS RELEASE**  
**KEY NOTE SPEECH BY AMERICAN COURT REFORMER**

A world-wide authority on court innovation gave senior Scots police officers an insight into enhancing the criminal justice system. Julius Lang from the Center for Court Innovation in New York was invited to speak at a seminar of over 50 officers today, Tuesday.

Organised by the Violence Reduction Unit, Mr Lang attended the event in Strathclyde Police Headquarters as part of a two week visit to Scotland. The seminar also took place on day two of a 12 month anti-violence campaign under the banner of Safer Scotland.

The Center for Court Innovation is a non-profit making think tank which helps courts, police and criminal justice partners to aid victims, reduce crime and violence and improve public trust in justice.

The Center combines action and reflection to spark problem-solving innovation both locally and nationally. The Center functions as the court system's independent research and development arm, creating demonstration projects that test new ideas. The Center's projects include:


- Community courts
- Drug courts
- Youth courts
- Re-entry courts
- Domestic violence courts, and
- Mental health courts

The Violence Reduction Unit has identified that a key strand of long term plans to tackle violence in Scotland, is swift and visible justice.

Speaking at the event, Mr Lang said

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“Previously, people felt courts were removed, they were out of touch, their work was incomprehensible, and local communities were unhappy with the “revolving door” of the justice system.

“Since the community courts were introduced, there has been a reduction in crime and an increase in public confidence.”



Mr Lang explained:

“In Midtown Manhattan, street prostitution was reduced by 56 per cent, and illegal street vending has fallen by 24 per cent. The Red Hook area of Brooklyn has gone without any homicides in the past two years – it hasn’t been that low in a generation.

“In terms of public confidence, in a random telephone survey of residents in Midtown Manhattan, 57 per cent said they were willing to pay additional taxes to support a community court. In another more striking example, in the Red Hook community in Brooklyn, where the approval rating for courts from 12 per cent when planning for the Community Justice Center first began, to the current level of 70 per cent. This increase has gone well beyond our expectations.

Inspector Tom Halbert from the Violence Reduction Unit, who organised the event, said afterwards:

“We were delighted that Julius Lang could come along and give us a real insight into his work in New York. The Center has made real inroads into bringing swift and visible justice to local communities. In the process of doing this, the Center has made a genuine difference to the service provided to victims, offenders and neighbourhoods. It has also enhanced public confidence in the justice system.”

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION -

Mr Julius Lang is Director of National Technical Assistance for the Center for Court Innovation. He oversees the Center’s many consulting services – including workshops, site visits and in-person consulting – for jurisdictions around the nation. He frequently speaks on behalf on the centre at national and regional conferences and workshops on a widerange of topics, including community prosecution, problem-solving courts and publicprivate partnerships.

Previously he served for five years as the co-ordinator of the Midtown Community Court - the Center’s first demonstration project in Manhattan’s Times Square neighbourhood. As the co-ordinator, Mr Lang worked with the New York Police Department to launch Street Outreach Services, their joint homeless outreach program and also initiated Times Square Link, the courts training program for low-level offenders.



He also initiated the Courts Community Impact Panels program, which brings together offenders and community members for a facilitated discussion about the impact of low level crime and possible strategies for it's prevention. Mr Lang is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and the Villanova University School of Law.