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NAACP Legal Defense Fund Salutes President Barack Obama

Dignity, Intelligence, Commitment to Equality Hallmarks of Obama Presidency

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) salutes President Barack Obama as he leaves office after eight years of service to his country. “For eight years, LDF has observed Barack Obama’s presidency with deep pride. Throughout his time in office, President Obama demonstrated dignity, intellectual brilliance, fairness, and a commitment to principles of equality and justice,” said Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of LDF.

As the first African-American to be elected President of the United States (twice), President Obama fulfilled the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* – demonstrating that no public office, no platform of achievement, and no position of power should be off limits to any American because of their race.

Indeed, one of LDF’s fondest memories is celebrating the [60th anniversary](#) of *Brown* in the White House with the President in May 2014. That gathering brought together members of the families of all the *Brown* plaintiffs from Kansas, South Carolina, Delaware, Virginia and Washington, D.C. LDF lawyers and board members including Jack Greenberg, who argued one of the *Brown* cases, and Thurgood Marshall’s widow, Mrs. Cecilia Marshall and William Coleman, former Secretary of Transportation and LDF board member were also present, along with all of the living former Director-Counsels of LDF. At the reception, in a moving and powerful statement, the President acknowledged that his ascent to the White House would not have been possible without the sacrifice of the families assembled in the East Room that day.

Mrs. Michelle Obama also deserves praise for her exemplary work and for the powerful example she set as First Lady. In addition to her commitment to the issues of ending childhood obesity and supporting military families, Mrs. Obama lifted up the needs of girls around the world – especially the right of girls to education. In 2015 Mrs. Obama acknowledged the contributions of women to the Civil Rights Movement at a wonderful and extraordinary program in the East Room of the White House.

Of the many achievements of President Obama’s two terms in office, LDF is especially grateful for his willingness to take on the difficult issue of policing reform – often in tense but frank meetings with law enforcement and activists – and the creation of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing. “The aggressive and fully-engaged work of the Department of Justice in confronting unconstitutional law enforcement practices in places like Baltimore, Ferguson, and Chicago has been critical to opening avenues for true and lasting reform,” observed Ifill.

Of course, LDF has not always agreed with the President on every issue. “Often we hoped to push the President to do even more in the area of civil rights. That is as it should be,” Ifill said. “Whether or not

we were successful, we were always certain that we would receive a hearing, that we would be treated respectfully, and that the President's desire was to use the powers with which he was entrusted to bring greater justice and greater equality to our country," concluded Ifill.

We offer our sincerest and warmest wishes to the entire Obama family and thank them for their service to our country.

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.