NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Muslim Advocates Commend Flyers’ Bill of Rights

Department of Transportation Guidelines Step Forward to End Profiling on Airlines

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) and Muslim Advocates commend the Department of Transportation’s (DOT) decision to release a “Flyers’ Bill of Rights” and guidelines for airlines, reaffirming that federal law prohibits discrimination against airline passengers on the basis of race and/or religion. Over the last year, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of incidents involving racial and religious profiling. The DOT documents released on Friday are a productive first step towards addressing this troubling situation.

“A person’s race, religion, or perceived national origin should never be considered in determining whether to take action against a passenger,” said Ajmel Quereshi of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. “The documents released Friday will hopefully help curb the troubling increase in incidents of racial and religious profiling on airlines.”

“No one should ever fear that they will be kicked off an airplane plane because of their faith or race,” said Brenda Abdelall, Muslim Advocates Charities Director. “In a time when discrimination continues to increase on airplanes, these new guidelines provide a step forward to ensuring that airline carriers stop targeting individuals because of a flight attendant’s or passenger’s personal bigotry.”

In May 2015, LDF and Muslim Advocates sent a letter to DOT expressing concern regarding incidents of discrimination between November 2015 and April 2016. Muslims, Sikhs, African Americans and persons who appeared to be of color were removed from flights for everyday activities like speaking Arabic, staring at a flight attendant, completing a math equation, or asking if they could switch seats. The letter asked for more guidance for airline carriers and greater transparency into discrimination cases. In response, DOT issued guidelines to address violations of passenger rights head-on. The new guidelines make clear that an airline passenger may not be removed on the basis of the language they are speaking, their perceived ethnicity, their mode of dress, or their perceived religion. Furthermore, the guidelines make clear to airline staff that before taking action against a passenger, they should examine whether specific facts exist which would justify the removal of the individual, regardless of the race or religion of the individual.

LDF and Muslim Advocates look forward to continuing to work with the Department on this issue. As a means of ensuring that race or religion is never considered, LDF continues to call
on all airlines to implement comprehensive anti-bias training on an annual basis for any and all staff members that interact with the public.

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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.*

*Muslim Advocates is a national legal advocacy and educational organization working on the frontlines of civil rights to guarantee freedom and justice for Americans of all faiths. Through high impact lawsuits, policy advocacy, and community education, Muslim Advocates serves as a resource to empower communities and ensures that the American Muslim community is heard by the courts and leaders at the highest level of government. Visit Muslim Advocates at [www.muslimadvocates.org](http://www.muslimadvocates.org) and follow @muslimadvocates.*