NAACP Legal Defense Fund Statement on the Violent White Supremacist Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia

Today, heavily-armed white supremacists gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia for a “Unite the Right” rally, which quickly turned violent and caused Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe to declare a state of emergency. Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), issued the following statement:

“White supremacist violence is an unconscionable part of our nation’s history, but we cannot allow it to poison our future. Our nation’s leadership, on both sides of the aisle, must not only forcefully condemn it, but work actively and affirmatively to stop it. This Administration rose to power on a wave of support from white nationalists, who are emboldened by the policies and rhetoric of the President and his surrogates. Leadership is more than a title and a posture. Leadership requires actions that strengthen the common good. The President and the Attorney General are sworn to execute and enforce the laws of this nation. This means that they are further obligated to encourage respect for our laws that protect against violence and discrimination. The Administration’s silence in the wake of white supremacist violence in Portland, Maryland and Minnesota, and lackluster response to the open support of notorious white supremacists has constituted an abdication of the kind of leadership we should expect from our President. Indeed, the President’s refusal to speak forcefully and unequivocally against white supremacy has laid the foundation for today’s march and violent confrontation.

“We are concerned as well by the response of law enforcement to the violent acts and provocation of the white supremacist marchers. In Ferguson, Baltimore, Baton Rouge and so many other cities across the country, we saw lawful, peaceful protests met with a militarized response from law enforcement. While we condemn the use of militarized force against protesters, we are concerned by the failure of police in Charlottesville to forcefully protect against violence at the gatherings last night and today when confronted by violent, combative white supremacists. We demand that law enforcement prosecute acts of violence and that the Charlottesville police provide a detailed accounting of the steps they took to protect clergy and other peaceful participants in this weekend’s events.”

###

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. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.