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NAACP Legal Defense Fund Statement on the Second Anniversary of the Mother Emanuel Shooting

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) remembers the nine men and women who were murdered in the massacre at the Emanuel A.M.E Church in Charleston, South Carolina two years ago tomorrow. We continue to mourn the loss of Reverend Clementa Pinckney, Reverend Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Reverend Daniel Simmons, Reverend Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Cynthia Hurd, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, and Myra Thompson. We will never forget their names, their faith, or their grace. On this second anniversary of the shooting, our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and friends of all those who perished, and with the congregation at Emanuel A.M.E. Church.

“The deadly attack on African-American parishioners as they participated in bible study shook this country to its core. It was a reminder – stark, brutal, and irrefutable – that racial terrorism remains a threat in our country,” said LDF President and Director-Counsel [Sherrilyn Ifill](#). “Terrorism targets not only the specific victims of an attack, but is meant to intimidate and paralyze the community. The members of Emanuel A.M.E. Church and the families of those killed showed with their dignity, unshakeable faith, and uncommon grace that we will not be cowed by acts of racial violence.”

Recent murders by white supremacists in New York, Maryland, and Oregon demonstrate that violent white supremacy remains a stubborn and persistent phenomenon in America. The unwillingness of President Trump and Attorney General Sessions to publicly condemn all of these recent incidents of racial violence – which included an army veteran and an army lieutenant among the victims – is a monumental failure of leadership.

We are inspired by the symbolic strength of Emanuel A.M.E., also known as “Mother Emanuel,” which was founded in 1816 by a group of enslaved Africans. Mother Emanuel has been recognized as an iconic symbol of liberty and progress throughout the South. It has endured natural disasters, arson, and antebellum laws that banned all-Black religious worship, all the while remaining a force for social change.

LDF was founded on the principle of equal justice under the law. At the core of this principle, is respect for the dignity and humanity of every human being. As our founder [Thurgood Marshall](#) once said, “In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.”

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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. 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.