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LDF Media
media@naacpldf.org

LDF Raises Alarm Over Mass Clemency of Insurrectionists

This week, President Trump issued a sweeping series of pardons and commutations to roughly 1,500 individuals who participated in the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol. This misuse of clemency powers includes leaders of anti-government groups with white nationalist ties: Henry “Enrique” Tarrío, the leader of the Proud Boys, and Stewart Rhodes, the leader of the Oath Keepers.

In response, **Legal Defense Fund (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson** issued the following statement:

“President Trump’s abuse of his constitutional powers to grant mass clemency for roughly 1,500 insurrectionists strikes a major blow to the foundation of our democracy. This act insulates those who attempted to overthrow our democratic process from accountability, legitimizes white supremacist violence that targeted public officials, and sends the clear message that President Trump will protect and hold above the law those who exact violent retribution on his behalf.

“Unlike the exercise of clemency powers to align with improved criminal legal policies, reward rehabilitation and acceptance of responsibility, or account for claims of innocence, the release of convicted individuals involved in attempting to overthrow our election is a demonstrable threat to the safety of all in our republic and our very democracy. This act shows reprehensible contempt for injured and fallen officers and all those whose lives were endangered at the Capitol on January 6th. It also emboldens future actors with the knowledge that they can be immunized in their attempts to thwart a peaceful transition of power or other acts of violence if they are favorable to President Trump.

“January 6, 2021 was a promise to America that the dream of a multi-racial democracy would be under siege by white supremacist and other subversive forces. With a broad slate of executive orders aimed at rejecting the realities of discrimination in this country by eroding and undermining our civil rights, and with this mass grant of commutations and pardons legitimizing white supremacist violence that sabotages the electoral process, President Trump is following through on the promise to dismantle the dream for a better America. But we have been here before. LDF will continue fighting for a multi-racial democracy and to fully protect the American people from voter suppression and election sabotage. There is no other path forward.”

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. 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 Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF 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.