



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **LDF Calls for a Fair and Impartial Trial in Marielle Franco and Anderson Gomes' Murders**

Today, a murder trial begins for Élcio Vieira Queiroz, former law enforcement officer and Ronnie Lessa, a former military police sergeant, accused of gunning down Marielle Franco, a 38-year-old queer Black woman, human rights defender, and Rio de Janeiro city council member, and Anderson Gomes, her 39-year-old driver, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Franco's 2018 killing was a horrific case of political violence against a Black elected official that sent shock waves across Brazil and around the globe. Franco spoke out against police brutality, and her killing became emblematic of the entrenched culture of impunity and lack of accountability that permeates criminal cases involving Black victims in Brazil. In addition, it underscores the significant disparities in law enforcement use of force and killings of Black people.

In 2024, Chiquinho Brazáo, a federal representative of Rio de Janeiro and Domingos Brazáo, a member of the Rio de Janeiro Court of Auditors, along with Rivaldo Barbosa, the former head of Rio's Civil Police were accused of ordering Franco's murder.

Legal Defense Fund (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson issued the following statement in reaction to this news.

"Marielle Franco's assassination is a troubling reminder of the deep-rooted racial inequity in Brazil and the persecution faced by Black communities throughout the Americas. As this trial is underway, Brazil must take actions to ensure that people are free and safe to participate in their democracy without being subject to police violence and threat. The start of this trial is a vital opportunity for Brazil's judiciary to send a message to civil society that political violence against individuals because of their gender, race, or who they love, will not be tolerated. Six years after Marielle and Anderson were taken from their families and communities, the world is watching to see that these legal proceedings are conducted according to the rule of law and principles of fairness, and impartiality.

"Having grown up in a favela, Marielle Franco was a fierce advocate for Black empowerment, young people in the favelas, and other marginalized communities. Although no action from the judiciary can bring Marielle and Anderson back, the state must address the root causes of poverty and injustice by advancing the political, economic, and social inclusion of Afro-descendant and Indigenous populations. LDF stands in solidarity with the racial justice and

human rights organizations in Brazil fighting to secure the full dignity and citizenship of Black and Indigenous Brazilians.”

In March of this year, LDF’s President and Director-Counsel and Associate Director-Counsel Tona Boyd participated in a fact-finding delegation in Brazil with JAPER, the U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality. Founded in 2008, JAPER is the first U.S.-Brazil bilateral agreement targeting racism. The goal of the initiative is to leverage interagency policy expertise alongside partnership with civil society and private sector committees in order to address racial health disparities, environmental justice, access to education, equal economic opportunities, and equal access to the justice system.

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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.*