

The logo for the National Constitution Center. It consists of a dark blue horizontal bar with the words "NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. To the right of the bar are three horizontal red stripes of varying lengths, stacked vertically.

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LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute and National Constitution Center Host Symposium to Commemorate the Fourteenth Amendment

Leading Legal Scholars, Historians, and Civil Rights Advocates Reflect on the Importance of the Amendment Ratified 150 Years Ago

The Thurgood Marshall Institute ([TMI](#)) at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the National Constitution Center ([NCC](#)) convened leading scholars, lawyers, and civil rights activists in Philadelphia, PA today to discuss the history, development, and continued relevance of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The co-hosted symposium commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Fourteenth Amendment—the Constitutional provision that guarantees equal protection under the law for all Americans. The keynote discussion with the 82nd Attorney General of the United States Eric H. Holder, Jr., Sherrilyn Ifill and Jeffery Rosen reflected on the importance of the Fourteenth Amendment in pursuit of economic justice, voting rights, access to education and affordable housing.

“The principal thrust of the Fourteenth Amendment was to ensure the full citizenship of the millions of formerly enslaved Black people living principally in the South. Despite the powerful words of the Fourteenth Amendment, its promise was denied to Black people for more than a hundred years. We needed the Civil Rights Movement, and the passage of sweeping civil rights statutes to bring even the basic elements of equality and citizenship to the lives of most Black living in the United States,” [said Sherrilyn Ifill](#), President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. “And today, 150 years after its passage, the struggle continues to give full meaning to the promise of the guarantees set out in the Fourteenth Amendment—not only for Black people, but for women, members of the LGBTQ community and all who are denied equal protection under the law.”

“The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees due process and equality under the law for all Americans,” said Eric H. Holder, Jr. “But for too many, there are unjust disparities when it comes to voting rights, housing rights, and our criminal justice system. Lawyers, advocates, and citizens must work together to make the promise of equality that is enshrined in the Fourteenth Amendment a reality.”

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“The National Constitution Center is honored to collaborate with the Thurgood Marshall Institute to convene America’s leading liberal and conservative scholars of Reconstruction, to educate Americans about the constitutional guarantees of equality that unite all Americans,” said Jeffrey Rosen, President and CEO of the National Constitution Center. “Today’s celebration is part of a yearlong commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Fourteenth Amendment that will culminate early next year in our opening of America’s first gallery of the constitutional legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction and the ongoing quest for equal protection under law.”

The symposium convened leading legal scholars and historians, including [Allen Guelzo](#), [Martha Jones](#), [Kurt Lash](#), and [Darrell Miller](#), who discussed the story of Reconstruction, leading to the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. Historians [Eric Foner](#), [Kate Masur](#), and [Thavolia Glymph](#) discussed the struggle over Reconstruction in American public memory. And scholars including [Randy Barnett](#), [Kimberly West-Faulcon](#), [Garrett Epps](#), [Janai Nelson](#), and [Earl Maltz](#) debated what the Fourteenth Amendment means today and in the future.

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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 (TMI) 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.

*The [National Constitution Center](#) in Philadelphia inspires citizenship as the only place where people across America and around the world can come together to learn about, debate, and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution. A private, nonprofit organization, the Center serves as America’s leading platform for constitutional education and debate, fulfilling its Congressional charter “to disseminate information about the U.S. Constitution on a nonpartisan basis.” As the **Museum of We the People**, the Center brings the Constitution to life for visitors of all ages through interactive programs and exhibits. As **America’s Town Hall**, the Center brings the leading conservative and liberal thought leaders together to debate the Constitution on all media platforms. As a center for **Civic Education**, the Center delivers the best educational programs and online resources that inspire, excite, and engage citizens about the U.S. Constitution. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit [constitutioncenter.org](#).*