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**Press Contacts:
Phoebe Plagens / TMI, NAACP LDF
212-965-2200 / media@naacpldf.org**

**A. Kenyatta Greer / Emory Law
404-692-1437 / kenyatta.greer@emory.edu**

**Mashaun D. Simon / Spelman College
404-270-5893 / msimon5@spelman.edu**

LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute, Emory Law School, and Spelman College Commemorate the Fourteenth Amendment

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

Today, the Thurgood Marshall Institute (the Institute) at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, [Emory University School of Law](#), and [Spelman College](#) will convene leading scholars, lawyers, and civil rights activists in Atlanta at two events that will touch on the history, development, and continued relevance of the Fourteenth Amendment—the constitutional provision that guarantees due process and equal protection under the law for all Americans.

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Institute and Emory will hold a discussion with leading legal scholars and historians, including [Sherrilyn Ifill](#), President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, [Carol Anderson](#), [Robert Chang](#), [Fred Smith, Jr.](#) and [Vesla Weaver](#), which will focus on the continued relevance of the Fourteenth Amendment and the need for lawyers, advocates, and citizens—especially the next generation—to safeguard and advance civil rights that are currently under attack.

This evening, the Institute and Spelman will host a keynote conversation between [Sherrilyn Ifill](#) and [Melissa Harris-Perry](#), Maya Angelou Presidential Chair at Wake Forest University. They will discuss the future of our democracy and the need for everyday citizens to help fulfill the full power and promise of the Fourteenth Amendment to safeguard our civil rights and ensure access to justice for all.

“150 years after the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund continues to work tirelessly as civil rights lawyers and advocates to fulfill the guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment—for Black people and for all who continue to be denied due process and equal protection under the law,” said [Sherrilyn Ifill](#). “We are delighted to partner with Emory Law School and a fellow African American legacy institution Spelman College in our culminating celebration of this critical amendment to our Constitution.”

“As scholars, practitioners, and advocates of the law, it is of ineffable importance to us that due process is observed and that all citizens are afforded equal protections,” said [James B. Hughes, Jr.](#), **Interim Dean of Emory University School of Law**. “This conversation will help us put in perspective the history of this law in America, and Emory Law is proud to participate in the exchange.”



“Founded 13 years after the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, Spelman College was created as a space for two demographics not explicitly considered by the Amendment – Black women and girls – to prepare young women of African descent for the promise and full actualization of the rights of citizenship,” said **Cynthia Neal Spence, Ph.D., director, Spelman College Social Justice Program**. “Not only do we prepare our women to exercise their rights as citizens, we also prepare them to seek social justice for those whose rights have been denied because of marginalization or disenfranchisement.

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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. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). Follow LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute on [Twitter](#).

Founded in 1916, [Emory University School of Law](#) is an American Bar Association (ABA) nationally accredited law school. Consistently ranked as one of the premier law schools in the United States, Emory Law offers exceptional doctrinal and practical legal education with signature programs in advocacy, transactional law, technology and IP law, law and religion, and vulnerability studies.

Founded in 1881, [Spelman College](#) is a leading liberal arts college widely recognized as the global leader in the education of women of African descent. Located in Atlanta, the College’s picturesque campus is home to 2,100 students. Spelman is the country’s leading producer of Black women who complete Ph.D.s in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The College’s status is confirmed by U.S. News and World Report, which ranked Spelman No. 51 among all liberal arts colleges and No. 1 among historically Black colleges and universities. The Wall Street Journal ranked the College No. 3, nationally, in terms of student satisfaction. Outstanding alumnae include Children’s Defense Fund Founder [Marian Wright Edelman](#), Starbucks Group President and COO [Rosalind Brewer](#), former Acting Surgeon General and Spelman’s first alumna President [Audrey Forbes Manley](#), global bioinformatics geneticist [Janina Jeff](#) and authors [Pearl Cleage](#) and [Tayari Jones](#). For more information, visit [www.spelman.edu](#).