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Statements Regarding Nikole Hannah-Jones

Nikole Hannah-Jones

"The right to free expression is a cornerstone of our democracy, and its protection is particularly critical for Black Americans and other marginalized groups who have a long history of battling infringement of this right. As a Black woman who has built a nearly two-decades long career in journalism, I believe Americans who research, study, and publish works that expose uncomfortable truths about the past and present manifestations of racism in our society should be able to follow these pursuits without risk to their civil and constitutional rights. I continue to be proud of my work through The Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting, The 1619 Project and my years of investigative reporting on the ways segregation and inequality is maintained through official action and policy.

To ensure the academic and journalistic freedom of Black writers is protected to the full extent of the law and to seek redress for the University of North Carolina's adverse actions against me, I have retained legal counsel to respond to the Board of Trustees' failure to consider and approve my application for tenure—despite the recommendation of the faculty, dean, provost and chancellor—at my alma mater, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Hussman School of Journalism and Media, which was a condition of my employment as a Knight Chair in Race and Investigative Journalism. I had no desire to bring turmoil or a political firestorm to the university that I love, but I am obligated to fight back against a wave of anti-democratic suppression that seeks to prohibit the free exchange of ideas, silence Black voices and chill free speech. I will be represented jointly by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Levy Ratner, P.C., and Ferguson Chambers & Sumter, P.A."

LDF

"The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), along with co-counsel Levy Ratner, P.C. and Ferguson Chambers & Sumter, P.A., have advised the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ("UNC") and its Board of Trustees (the "Board") that we will be representing Nikole Hannah-Jones in connection with the Board's unprecedented failure to



consider and approve the faculty recommendation of tenure for her Knight Foundation-endowed Chair in Race and Investigative Journalism.

All previous UNC Knight Chairs have received tenure in conjunction with their appointments, and Ms. Hannah-Jones's credentials not only match but exceed those of prior UNC Knight Chairs. The Board of Trustees' refusal to consider and approve her tenure recommendation is in lock step with the political, conservative and race-based backlash across the country that seeks to revise the truth of racism throughout our Nation's history and to censor honest conversations about race in America. To retaliate against truth-tellers, like Ms. Hannah-Jones, for speaking honestly, accurately, and bravely about some of the most shameful and enduring acts of oppression in our country is one of the most dangerous forms of discrimination and repression in a democratic society. UNC has unlawfully discriminated against Ms. Hannah-Jones based on the content of her journalism and scholarship and because of her race. We will fight to ensure that her rights are vindicated."