



For Immediate Release

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Release of ABA Building Public Trust Task Force Report Comes at Critical Time for Criminal Justice Reform

Statement of NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

Today, the American Bar Association approved the [report](#) of its Task Force on Building Public Trust in the American Justice System, which examined the policies and practices that have led to distrust between police and the communities they serve and recommended solutions to address that distrust.

“This report comes at a critical time in our nation’s history,” said Monique Dixon, Deputy Director of Policy for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) and Reporter to the Task Force. “If we are to build trust between police and communities they serve, criminal justice reform must remain a priority. This report sends a clear message to ABA members, allies, and the legal profession that it is still a priority, regardless of a shift in the political landscape.”

The ABA brought the task force together as the nation finally began to confront what it could no longer ignore: the killing of African-American men, women, and children by police. ABA leadership formed the task force in July of 2016, giving it a mandate: “To strengthen the rule of law by collaborating with other organizations, including bar associations, to increase the public’s trust in the justice system.” LDF has been working closely with the ABA in response to its request to assist with examining and addressing the strained relationship between communities of color and law enforcement.

After seven months of research and review, the report makes three important recommendations for actions ABA members should take:

1. Encourage the adoption of best practices for reforming the criminal justice system;
2. Build consensus about needed reforms and work to carry them out;
3. Educate the public about how the criminal justice system works.

As the report notes, “although the focus of this report is on the gulf of mistrust between minority communities and law enforcement, it speaks to a far broader audience. The task force was not constituted to respond to the narrow concerns of a particular community. This report is for all of us. All Americans benefit when our criminal justice system lives up to its ideals—when the rule of law is administered impartially and when law enforcement practices, both inside and outside of the

courthouse, are free from bias and excessive force. Both the police and the public are made safer when the system is not, nor is perceived to be, discriminatory."

"This is work for all of us," continued Dixon. "Building trust between communities of color and law enforcement requires long-term commitment to promoting criminal justice policies that are fair and lawful. The ABA is demonstrating that commitment and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund looks forward to working with the ABA and its members to continue and build upon these important first steps," Dixon concluded.

Read the full report [here](#).

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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.