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LDF Media

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LDF & Seyfarth File Lawsuit on Behalf of Descendant of Black Family Forced Out of Wealthy California Neighborhood Through Fraud and Violence

Today, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) joined Seyfarth Shaw LLP in filing a state [lawsuit](#) in Alameda County, California on behalf of a descendant of Sidney and Iréne Dearing, who were dispossessed of their home when the city pursued a fraudulent condemnation action against them, claiming in court that the city needed to seize the family's property for public use.

In 1924, the Dearings were the first Black homeowners in the city of Piedmont, California. The forced taking of the Dearings' property came after a relentless campaign of violence in which city officials failed to protect the Dearings from threats of lynching, multiple attempted bombings, and other racially motivated terror. Today's lawsuit seeks redress, including an apology and compensation, for Piedmont's actions that deprived the Dearings of their home, generational wealth, and other benefits of home ownership in the wealthy enclave.

"It's deeply painful, but necessary, to confront the trauma and other harms my family continues to face because of governmental action to take my great-grandparents' home solely because they were Black homeowners," said **a descendant of the Dearings and plaintiff in the lawsuit**. "This lawsuit seeks to right some of the many wrongs and compensate for the hopes and dreams, generational wealth, and opportunities that the City denied my family through lies and violence rooted in racial discrimination."

"The taking of land from Black people through government action, the violence that has often accompanied these land thefts, and the harms that flow from it, have a long and shameful record in the United States, including in Piedmont, California. These forcible expulsions must be acknowledged and repaired, and Piedmont has the authority and resources to do so," **said Leah Aden, Senior Counsel at LDF**.

"We are proud to partner with the Legal Defense Fund and to provide pro bono counsel to the client to pursue accountability from the City of Piedmont," said **Arnold E. Brown II, Partner at Seyfarth Shaw LLP**.

This lawsuit comes as other localities in California and across the nation have begun to confront other racially motivated takings that have harmed Black individuals and communities, and some municipalities have taken reparative action. For example, officials in Bruce Beach, Palm Springs, Santa Monica, and other areas of California have apologized and provided compensation, among other measures, to redress similar harms borne out of racially motivated land loss.

Read the full complaint [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights legal organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957, though it was founded under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall while he was at the NAACP. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute (TMI) is a division of LDF that undertakes innovative research and houses LDF's archive. In all media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF (do not include NAACP) and refer to the Institute as LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute or TMI.