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LDF Welcomes Claude Johnson as Its New Chief Development Officer

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), announced that Claude Johnson, a development executive who has spent decades fundraising for higher education institutions and other top-level non-profit clients, has been named Chief Development Officer for the nation's leading civil rights legal organization.

Mr. Johnson, who most recently served as the Chief Advancement Officer for Friends of the High Line and Vice President of Development and Communications with The WNET Group, will officially assume his role at LDF on November 29, 2021. He brings with him 40 years of experience in the non-profit sector, over a career that has included arts management, consultancy, and major gifts fundraising in the higher education and culture sectors.

“Claude Johnson is a highly accomplished senior executive who now brings his impressive track record of leveraging fundraising acumen, community relationships, and strategic insight to LDF’s development efforts,” said Sherrilyn Ifill, LDF President and Director-Counsel. “We are pleased to have him join at this pivotal juncture of growth for our organization, where he will be critical to helping chart innovative and sustainable paths to advancing the issues that matter most to our diverse and committed base of supporters, community members, and stakeholders.”

“Like so many Americans, I have personally benefited from the tireless efforts of the LDF,” said Mr. Johnson. “As such, I am thrilled and honored to join the LDF community at this critical time, as we face the complex challenges of fulfilling the promise of democracy. I am eager to collaborate with the board, staff, and other stakeholders to assure that LDF has the renewable resources to robustly advance its mission.”

Mr. Johnson began his career as an arts management professional working for the Rod Rodgers Dance Company and the Negro Ensemble Company, and over the years has provided strategic planning, program assessment, and community engagement expertise to a range of consultancy clients, including The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the Walker Arts Center. Mr. Johnson also previously served as Associate Director of Development in UCLA’s College of Fine Arts, and as Assistant Dean in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University’s division of Alumni Affairs and Development. Also at Cornell, as Associate Vice President, he established the university’s Northeast Corridor Program to cover the region from Boston to Washington, D.C., as part of a restructuring of the institution’s regional major gifts program. Mr. Johnson also founded the inaugural New York Regional Office for Northwestern University.

Mr. Johnson holds an MBA from UCLA's Anderson School of Management and a BA from the University of Pennsylvania. He currently serves on the board of directors for Pret a Manger's Pret Foundation and Brooklyn's 651 ARTS, where he co-chairs the development committee.

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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. LDF 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](#).