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LDF Welcomes Dr. OiYan Poon as Education Equity Fellow of the Thurgood Marshall Institute

The [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) has welcomed Dr. OiYan Poon as the Education Equity Fellow at the [Thurgood Marshall Institute](#), LDF's multidisciplinary research and advocacy center launched in 2015. Dr. Poon is a renowned community-engaged researcher, scholar, and educator whose groundbreaking research focuses on the racial politics of Asian Americans, education access, affirmative action, and admissions systems and practices. In her role as Education Equity Fellow, Dr. Poon will conduct research that explores the intersection of race and traditional indications of merit.

"We are thrilled to welcome Dr. OiYan Poon to the Thurgood Marshall Institute to serve as our Education Equity Fellow," said Janai Nelson, LDF President and Director-Counsel. "Dr. Poon brings a breadth of knowledge and insight to her role at a crucial time in which the intersections of education and equity are pivotal to understanding our future as a society and nation. Her expertise and dedication to advancing racial equity in education will be invaluable to LDF's work and the Institute's research."

Dr. Poon is the author of a forthcoming book "Asian American Is Not a Color: Conversations on Race, Affirmative Action, and Family" (Beacon Press, 2024), which explores the pivotal role of Asian Americans in shaping the future of race relations through debates over education policies like affirmative action. She has also served as a lead co-author of [amicus briefs](#) defending diversity and race-conscious admissions, where she made significant contributions to federal court cases, including the *SFFA v. Harvard* case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

"I am honored to join the brilliant team at LDF and be part of the work to advance racial justice through research at the Thurgood Marshall Institute," said Dr. Poon.

"We look forward to collaborating with Dr. Poon on groundbreaking research that will deepen our understanding of the intersection of race and traditional indicators of merit in higher education," said Karla McKanders, Director of the Thurgood Marshall Institute. "We are eager to learn from her study and are confident that her leadership will further elevate the impact of the Thurgood Marshall Institute."

Dr. Poon earned her Ph.D. in Race & Ethnic Studies in Education from UCLA, and her M.Ed. in College Student Affairs Administration from the University of Georgia. She has a bachelor's degree from Boston College. Prior to joining LDF, Dr. Poon served as a program officer at the Spencer Foundation and Associate Professor of Higher Education Leadership at Colorado State University. She has also served in student affairs leadership roles at George Mason University and UC Davis, advocating for Asian American and Pacific Islander students and multicultural education.

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. 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 Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that 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.