



For Immediate Release
Friday, April 25, 2025

LDF Media
media@naacpldf.org

LDF Denounces Updated Justice Department Civil Rights Division Mission Statement

Last week, the U.S. Justice Department issued an updated mission statement on behalf of its Civil Rights Division, directing its staff to prioritize the enforcement of a range of irrational and unlawful executive orders from the Trump White House that target civil rights organizations and long-standing practices.

In response to the new mission statement, Legal Defense Fund (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson issued the following statement:

“Civil rights are the fundamental guarantees of a modern society – to signal that the fight for racial equality will have no place at the U.S. Justice Department is wholly antithetical to the Department’s existence. The Trump administration is treating the founding mission of the Civil Rights Division with blatant contempt and utter disregard.

“These guidelines set a dangerous and woefully irresponsible precedent for our country’s law enforcement officials. The Department is announcing loud and clear that it would rather serve Trump’s political agenda of the day than its original purpose of fighting race-based discrimination. This demonstrates an astounding mission reversal for the Justice Department.

“Since our founding 85 years ago, LDF has never strayed in our mission to protect civil rights and ensure that Black Americans experience the true equality promised by our Constitution. Our work will not change. The government may neglect their responsibilities, they may willfully ignore their duty to combat discrimination, but LDF will not. We will continue, as always, to fight for racial justice, equality, and an inclusive society.”

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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.