



**For Immediate Release**  
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**LDF President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill Named The American Lawyer's Attorney of the Year**

Today, The American Lawyer named Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), its 2020 Attorney of the Year. Ms. Ifill was selected for the prestigious award for her tireless and inspiring leadership at LDF, where in 2020 she guided the organization in tackling a myriad of civil rights and racial justice issues that were laid bare amidst a devastating pandemic that continues to disproportionately impact Black communities, national protests against police violence, and elections fraught with attempts to disenfranchise Black voters.

“I am excited and thrilled to have been selected by The American Lawyer as Attorney of the Year for 2020,” said Ms. Ifill in her acceptance remarks. “I am privileged to lead the most wonderful, dedicated, and brilliant cohort of attorneys, I think, in this country. And this past year, we worked like never before to uphold the rights of those most marginalized and to uphold and strengthen American democracy. This past year tested our entire profession. Sometimes we excelled and were true profiles in courage. In other instances, lawyers and institutions of our profession failed to uphold and advance the rule of law and revealed the work we must do to strengthen our profession.

“I issue a challenge to myself and to my colleagues in our profession that, in 2021, we look with clarity at ourselves, and that we work to ensure that we are upholding our profession’s highest ideals – that we recognize the privileged and influential role that we play in this democracy, and that we are unafraid, courageous, and clear about the commitment to honoring that privilege with high ethical standards and adherence to the principles of equality and justice. I challenge us all to stand shoulder-to-shoulder and to do the hard work of assessing the damage that has been done, examining our failures, and identifying and implementing measures that send a clear message that our profession is one of integrity and strict adherence to democratic values.”

In its profile of Ms. Ifill, The American Lawyer said: “Over the past year, Ifill and the LDF have led multiple suits aiming to ferret out corruption and bias affecting voting rights and criminal justice issues, including against the city of Louisville, Kentucky, over its ‘militaristic’ response to peaceful protests, as well as against the Trump administration for attempting to disenfranchise Black voters in Michigan. Through it all, Ifill has been active in the media, joining programs like ‘60 Minutes’ to discuss how America came to arrive at its most recent policing crisis, and discussing on MSNBC the need for transparency in the investigation into George Floyd’s death at the hands of Minneapolis police.”

Alongside Ms. Ifill, finalists for the Attorney of the Year award were Pamela Karlan, a Professor at Stanford Law School and former LDF Assistant Counsel and Cooperating Attorney; Michele Roberts of the National Basketball Players Association; and David Lat of Lateral Link.

Ms. Ifill became LDF's seventh President and Director-Counsel in 2013 and is only the second woman to lead the organization. In 2020, LDF filed several suits challenging efforts to disenfranchise or otherwise make it more difficult for Black Americans and other citizens to vote, brought litigation against a Trump Administration Executive Order that would constrain free speech on issues of race and diversity, fought for citizens peacefully protesting against police violence, and continued to carry out its mandate as the nation's premier defender of civil rights and racial justice as issues of inequality were brought to the fore. Under Ms. Ifill's tenure, LDF has also advanced its public advocacy campaigns and research development through the establishment of the Thurgood Marshall Institute.

Before leading LDF, Ms. Ifill taught civil procedure and constitutional law at the University of Maryland Law School in Baltimore for 20 years, and served as an Assistant Counsel at LDF from 1988-93. Her 2007 book, "On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," was highly acclaimed and is credited with laying the foundation for contemporary conversations about lynching and reconciliation.

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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](#).*