



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Janai Nelson Testifies Before House Homeland Security Committee  
on Discriminatory TSA Policies**

*Janai Nelson, Associate Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), testified before the House Homeland Security Committee on how Transportation Security Administration (TSA) policies are profiling and disproportionately burdening people of color alongside [Sikh Coalition Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager Sim J. Singh](#) and Acting Director of the Homeland Security and Justice Team W. William Russel.*

“In and out of the workplace, Black people in the United States face barriers or judgments when they display their natural hair,” said Nelson. “Locs in particular have long been the target of deep-seated negative stereotypes about Black people and their hair—mainly, that Black hair is dirty, unprofessional, or unkempt. In fact, the term ‘dreadlocks’ originated from slave traders who described Africans’ hair that had naturally formed into locs as ‘dreadful.’ For Black women in particular, these stereotypes often compel them to undertake costly, time-consuming, and harsh measures to straighten their hair to conform to the predominant white culture and standards of professionalism and beauty. The pressure to take such measures in order to be treated equally in the workplace is deeply lamentable, and it is a pressure exacerbated by TSA’s practices and policies.”

Later, Nelson continued, “We appreciate TSA’s role in maintaining safe travel, as well as its attention to the ongoing problems discussed in this testimony and those shared by others today. TSA’s obligation to treat all passengers with dignity and to protect their constitutional and civil rights, as well as their safety is a critical one. LDF looks forward to continuing to engage on these issues and would welcome the opportunity to work with TSA on finding innovative solutions that serve the needs of TSA while protecting the dignity and civil rights of all travelers.”

You can read Janai Nelson’s full written testimony [here](#).

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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 and 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.*

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