

Civil Rights Leaders Issue Statement on Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Legacy and the Supreme Court's Critical Role in Protecting Civil Rights

For Immediate Release: Thursday, September 24, 2020

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Today, as the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is lying in repose at the nation's highest court, leading national racial justice organizational leaders issued a joint statement on her legacy and the critical role of the Supreme Court in protecting civil rights. These leaders are:

- Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
- Kristen Clarke, President and Executive Director, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law
- Derrick Johnson, President and CEO, NAACP
- Marc H. Morial, President and CEO, National Urban League
- Rev. Al Sharpton, Founder and President, National Action Network
- Melanie L. Campbell, President and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
- Vanita Gupta, President and CEO, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Their statement follows:

“Today, the country mourns and honors the legacy of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a passionate and trailblazing civil rights lawyer and brilliant jurist whose dedication to the principle of equality breathed life and meaning into the words etched on the frontage of the Supreme Court building ‘equal justice under law.’ From her years successfully litigating sex discrimination cases before the Supreme Court to her abiding commitment to ensuring equality under the law as the second woman to ever sit on the bench of the nation’s highest court, Justice Ginsburg has left an indelible mark on American jurisprudence and our collective democracy — and we are forever grateful for her unwavering commitment to fairness, justice, and equality.

“As leaders of civil rights organizations, we are keenly aware of the critical role that the Supreme Court has played in protecting the civil rights of racial minorities. It has only been 66 years since the Court ended legal apartheid in this country by striking down the constitutionality of state-sanctioned segregation laws. The Court has affirmed countless hard-won civil rights protections, barring racial segregation in schools, upholding laws against housing and employment discrimination, affirming the right to marriage equality, and reaffirming the constitutionality of affirmative action. Although the Court has, over decades, consistently upheld the provisions of the Voting Rights Act, its 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, and the ensuing wave of voter suppression schemes that have proliferated in the country, demonstrates how easily the Court’s decisions can unravel core civil rights protections. Justice Ginsburg’s dissent in *Shelby County v. Holder*, which accurately diagnosed the consequences of the Court’s determination to supersede Congress’ judgment about the ongoing need for a key provision of the Act, is itself a testament to the power and prescience of her constitutional vision.

“We regard the selection and confirmation of justices to the Court as among the most consequential acts affecting civil rights. In fact, the upcoming Court session will once again include a docket of cases that address racism in the criminal justice system. Selecting a new Supreme Court justice requires careful consideration by a president, and rigorous vetting by the members of the Senate, who are constitutionally-empowered to provide ‘advice and consent’ to nominations. Under no circumstances should this process take place during the conduct of a presidential general election.

“We oppose any attempt by the president and the Senate to fill Justice Ginsburg’s seat prior to the commencement of Congress’ new session and the presidential inauguration in January 2021. Any such effort is an affront to democratic principles and a violation of the trust of the American people who, at this very moment are voting in states all over this country to select their next president and senators, and it is only fitting that these newly-elected officials determine who will receive a lifetime seat on the most powerful and consequential court in the country.

“That the Senate Majority Leader, who blocked consideration of a nominee to the Supreme Court in 2016, nine months before the presidential general election, now seeks to press ahead with a rushed confirmation of a presidential nominee this year, even as the general election is underway and 40 days before Election Day, is an act of brazen hypocrisy, and is an exercise of raw political power that damages the legitimacy of both the Senate and the Court.

“It is more critical than ever that Americans vote in the general election — whether through participating in early voting, submitting an absentee ballot, or heading to the polls on Election Day. Every voter should have a voting plan and should familiarize themselves with election laws in their locality — and ensure that their friends, family, and fellow community members do the same. The consequences of this election could not be greater, and voters must ensure that their voices are heard, and their interests are represented. The future of American democracy depends on it.”

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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 (TMI) 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 and TMI on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, was formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal services to address racial discrimination. Now in its 57th year, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is continuing its quest to "Move America Toward Justice." The principal mission of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is to secure, through the rule of law, equal justice for all, particularly in the areas of criminal justice, fair housing and community development, economic justice, educational opportunities, and voting rights.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals. For more information on The Leadership Conference and its member organizations, visit www.civilrights.org.

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's largest and foremost grassroots civil rights organization. The mission of the NAACP is to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. Members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights and social justice in their communities. You can read more about the NAACP's work by visiting naacp.org.

National Action Network is one of the leading civil rights organizations in the Nation with chapters throughout the entire United States. Founded in 1991 by Reverend Al Sharpton, NAN works within the spirit and tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to promote a modern civil rights agenda that includes the fight for one standard of justice, decency and equal opportunities for all people regardless of race, religion, nationality or gender. For more information go to www.nationalactionnetwork.net

The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP), founded in 1976, is one of the most active civil rights and social justice organizations in the nation "dedicated to increasing civic engagement, economic and voter empowerment in Black America." The Black Women's Roundtable (BWR) is the women and girls empowerment arm of the NCBCP. At the forefront of championing just and equitable public policy on behalf of Black women, BWR promotes their health and wellness, economic security & prosperity,

education and global empowerment as key elements for success. Visit www.ncbcp.org and follow us on Twitter @ncbcp and Instagram @thenationalcoalition.

The National Urban League is a historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment in order to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities. The National Urban League spearheads the efforts of its 90 local affiliates through the development of programs, public policy research and advocacy, providing direct services that impact and improve the lives of more than 2 million people annually nationwide. Visit www.nul.org and follow us on Twitter and Instagram: @NatUrbanLeague.