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## **LDF Reflects on Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Highlights Continued Need for Disaster Resilience Investments for Black Communities**

Twenty years ago, Hurricane Katrina made landfall and devastated the Gulf Coast of the United States. [Over 1,000 people lost their lives during Hurricane Katrina](#), and nearly [1.5 million were displaced](#). In New Orleans, where Black residents made up the majority of the population at the time, and coastal towns in Mississippi, recovery efforts revealed deep racial and economic disparities. On this day of remembrance, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) honors the lives lost and communities displaced by one of the most devastating natural disasters in recent U.S. history.

“As we mark this solemn day, we remember not only the storm itself and the lives lost, but the systemic failures that turned a natural disaster into a man-made catastrophe,” said **Demetria McCain, Director of Policy at LDF**. “Time and time again, we’ve witnessed a consistent and unacceptable pattern: Black communities and other communities of color are ignored and neglected when it comes to recovery and rebuilding after major storms. To build a future where disaster resilience is a right, not a privilege, the continued vulnerability of Black neighborhoods across the country must be addressed. Because tornados, hurricanes, and other national disasters are likely to increase in the United States, we need to heed the lessons of Hurricane Katrina and take proactive steps to protect all communities before, during, and after a disaster.”

In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, LDF attorneys working in and around New Orleans were part of the critical process of rebuilding. LDF staff were embedded in New Orleans and worked collaboratively for over two years in historically Black neighborhoods to assess local housing needs as well as employment and educational gaps for displaced persons. LDF also conducted extensive outreach to increase and consolidate voter access, ensure voter protection, and stop the potential disfranchisement of nearly 18,000 Black residents who were returning to Louisiana in the first municipal elections after Katrina.

Today, LDF [continuously urges the U.S. government](#) to uphold its civil rights obligations during and after national disasters, especially for Black communities that have faced persistent racial discrimination in federal disaster recovery programs. LDF also has an enduring commitment to the well-being of Black people in Louisiana and Mississippi as the organization fights for equal access to education, the right to be fairly represented, and fair housing.

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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.*