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LDF Calls on Los Angeles City Councilors to Resign Over Racist Remarks

In a 2021 private conversation about the Los Angeles City Council redistricting process that was recently disclosed to the public by the Los Angeles Times, now-former Los Angeles City Council president Nury Martinez and fellow Council members Gil Cedillo and Kevin de Leon were recorded making unacceptable, vile, anti-Black racist remarks.

Los Angeles County Federation of Labor President Ron Herrera, who was also a part of the conversation, resigned today for engaging with the racist behavior associated with the leaked audio. While Council member Martinez has stepped down as President, she has not yet stepped down from her seat on the Council. Both constituents and fellow councilmembers, as well as congressional representatives from the state of California including U.S. Senator Alex Padilla and others, have called for the full resignation of all three members of the Council. LDF has formally issued the same demand.

In response, [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson issued the following statement:

“The sentiments expressed by Council members Martinez, Cedillo, and de Leon were reprehensible and they must each immediately resign from their positions on the City Council. We also call on members of the City Council to formally introduce a motion to censure the three Council members for their behavior. They not only expressed anti-Black racist views, they did so in the context of executing their duties as council members engaged in a redistricting process to determine full and fair representation for all Angelenos.

“While we are forced to operate within an inherited political system designed to fuel competition among communities of color and the marginalized, we are also charged – especially those in elected office – with the task of bringing greater equity to the process. A process that involves a long and sordid history of racial gerrymandering, including in Los Angeles, that violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as well as the U.S. Constitution. Rather than work to effectuate unbiased power-sharing, these elected officials have denigrated the process by infecting it with racial animus and conduct unbecoming any officeholder.

“There is a long and rich history of collaboration among Black and Latino communities even when we have disagreed. Angelenos should have confidence that their elected leaders are acting to advance the community's interests, not thwart them. This incident demonstrates the need to recommit ourselves to working to ensure that the communities we represent do not replicate the same divisive and toxic models that we are fighting against.”

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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.