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LDF Condemns Hateful Language Denigrating Immigrants of Color

Recently, multiple public officials, including Portage County, Ohio Sheriff Bruce Zuchowski, unleashed a deluge of hateful language aimed at immigrants of color and asylum seekers.

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

“The recent onslaught of hateful language aimed at immigrants of color, and Haitian immigrants specifically, is a dangerous form of dehumanizing rhetoric that creates an environment in which violence is condoned and implicitly encouraged. It is no coincidence that this type of dangerous rhetoric has long accompanied hate-motivated incidents and the persistence of racial intolerance across history. In recent days, an unprecedented spate of violent threats has caused evacuations of elementary schools, high schools, and government buildings; cancelations of in-person activities at universities; and lockdowns at a hospital and medical center in Springfield, Ohio. Hateful rhetoric targeted at people of color compromises the safety and security of entire communities.

“LDF continues to defend the dignity and rights of Haitians in the U.S. who have long experienced anti-Black bias and anti-immigrant xenophobia. In 2018, LDF challenged the Trump Administration’s decision to remove Temporary Protected Status for Haitian immigrants as intentionally discriminatory on the basis of race and/or ethnicity. In a 1985 dissent in *Jean v. Nelson*, LDF founder and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall asserted that Haitians have a Fifth Amendment right to be free from invidious discrimination based on race or national origin. The 35th anniversary of that dissenting opinion was the subject of a [2020 conference](#) organized by LDF and the New York University School of Law. LDF’s commitment to fight for the equitable and just treatment of all Black people, including Haitian immigrants, is unwavering. There is no place for hate or racial intolerance in an inclusive, multi-racial democracy.

“The weaponization of dehumanizing language by law enforcement officials contributes to a heightened risk of violence and is particularly egregious and abhorrent given their duty to respond to threats in the larger community, which includes immigrant

communities. The Portage County Sheriff's dehumanization of immigrants puts his constituents at risk. His call instructing individuals to note the addresses of homes posting political signs supporting a candidate with whom he disagrees is anti-democratic and makes his residents unsafe. We urge DOJ and DHS to investigate the actions of Portage County Sheriff Zuchowski, and to ensure that the residents of Springfield, Ohio and Portage County are safe from political intimidation, racist threats of targeted violence, and law enforcement conduct that threatens public safety.”

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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.