



For Immediate Release
February 20, 2020

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LDF Files Amicus Brief Supporting the Right of Juvenile Life Without Parole Offenders to Have a Meaningful Opportunity to Achieve Release

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) filed an amicus brief in *Brown v. Preycthe*. The brief urges the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold the district court’s ruling that Missouri’s parole procedures for people sentenced to juvenile life without parole (JLWOP) did not comply with United States Supreme Court precedent because they did not provide a meaningful opportunity for release.

“The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that children are constitutionally distinct from adults, and that children can only be sentenced to life in prison without parole in the rarest circumstances where their crimes reflect ‘permanent incorrigibility,’” said Daniel Harawa, Of Counsel at LDF. “Missouri failed to meet this standard. In fact, race, rather than capacity for rehabilitation, appears to play a bigger role in determining who spends their life in prison for crimes they committed as a child in the State.”

As further explained in the brief, the hearings Missouri provided to individuals sentenced to LWOP as juveniles were not consistent with Supreme Court precedent, because those hearings did not provide individuals an adequate opportunity to demonstrate maturity and rehabilitation. Instead, individuals with JLWOP sentences were regularly denied parole based solely on the nature of the crime(s) for which they were convicted, meaning there was no meaningful opportunity for release.

Further, although Missouri’s population is only 12% African American, 62% of the people serving JLWOP sentences in Missouri are Black. These severe racial disparities reflect racial bias in the nation’s juvenile justice system more broadly. Black juvenile defendants are far more likely to receive JLWOP sentences, especially if the victims in their cases are white.

As the country’s first and foremost civil rights law organization, LDF has worked for decades to eliminate the arbitrary role of race in the administration of the criminal justice system, and has submitted briefs in a number of landmark cases regarding children’s rights in the criminal justice system.

Read a copy of our brief [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. 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 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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