

## **NAACP Legal Defense Fund Announces New Hires, Promotions, and Fellows**

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), the nation's oldest civil rights legal organization, is pleased to announce the addition of **Christine Gregory** as its new chief operating officer and **Lisa Cylar Barrett** as senior policy counsel, as well as several recent changes in its litigation department. **Jin Hee Lee** is now senior deputy director of Litigation, **Leah Aden** is now deputy director of litigation, Senior Counsels **Rachel Kleinman** and **Chris Kemmitt** have both been named Director of Professional Development, and **Jennifer Holmes** is now assistant counsel. In addition, LDF welcomes five new fellows: **Louis Fisher**, **Steven Lance**, **Zachery Morris**, **Kerrel Murray**, and **Patricia Okonta**.

“These exciting changes strengthen LDF’s position as a leader in the fight for civil rights and racial justice,” said LDF President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill. “As our new chief operating officer, Christine brings decades of high-level management and legal experience, with an especially strong record in helping institutions chart their course for the future. On the litigation side, Jin, Leah, Rachel, Chris, and Jennifer have all distinguished themselves as exceptionally talented and driven lawyers and will continue to enhance LDF’s litigation team in these new leadership roles. The addition of Lisa to our policy team strengthens our capacity to advocate for stronger civil rights protections on Capitol Hill and across the federal government. And our fellows represent the very best of the next generation of civil rights lawyers: energetic, passionate, and determined to make a difference.”

Christine Gregory Gregory was previously the assistant vice president of strategic initiatives, diversity, and Title IX at Marymount Manhattan College, where she provided executive leadership and support to the president. During her tenure, she established policies to ensure compliance with state and federal civil rights laws, set key institutional priorities to advance campus digital accessibility, and led the implementation of the college’s strategic plan. Before working at Marymount Manhattan College, Ms. Gregory served as assistant dean for student affairs at the University of Michigan Law School, where she helped design the school’s strategic plan for diversity.

Lisa Cylar Barrett comes to LDF from the research and advocacy group PolicyLink, where she served as managing director of federal policy. In that role, she oversaw the development and execution of strategies to advance racial and economic equity. During her tenure at PolicyLink she led successful efforts to include the Promise Neighborhoods cradle to career program, and other equity focused language, in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and had defended and advanced key policies impacting fair housing, equitable infrastructure, clean water and access to healthy food. Having worked in the legal, philanthropic and policy/advocacy arenas, Ms. Cylar Barrett brings significant experience regarding how to effectively execute multi-pronged strategies to achieve policy goals.

Jin Hee Lee has been named senior deputy director of litigation. A 10-year veteran of LDF, Ms. Lee had previously served as deputy director of litigation. She is the lead plaintiffs’ attorney in *Davis v. City of New York*, a federal classaction lawsuit challenging unlawful police searches in New York City public housing. In addition, she is lead counsel in *Reams v. Arkansas*,

a death penalty case in Arkansas, where she recently argued before the state supreme court. As lead counsel in *Brister v. Mississippi*, Ms. Lee investigated, conceptualized, and litigated the first case in Mississippi—and one of the first cases in the country—in which a mandatory juvenile life without parole sentence was declared unconstitutional. Before joining LDF, she worked as an attorney at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.

Leah Aden is now deputy director of litigation. She was a member of LDF's litigation team in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, a high-profile case in which the Supreme Court of the United States severely weakened the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In addition to several other voting rights cases, she also serves as lead counsel in a challenge to the discriminatory at-large method for electing members to Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana's 32nd Judicial District parish court in *Terrebonne Parish Branch NAACP, et al. v. Jindal, et al.* Before joining LDF, Ms. Aden was a litigation associate in the New York office of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, LLP, having earned the prestigious Fried, Frank/LDF Fellowship.

Rachel Kleinman and Chris Kemmitt have both been promoted to senior counsel & director of professional development. Ms. Kleinman joined in LDF in 2011 as an assistant counsel. During her tenure, she has worked on numerous major cases. She is currently lead counsel in *Little v. Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA)*, a federal class action lawsuit challenging WMATA's excessively broad criminal background screening policy. She also led LDF's efforts in *Fisher v. University of Texas*, a landmark affirmative action case that found its way to the Supreme Court in 2015. In addition to her litigation duties, she has taught LDF's Racial Equity Strategies Clinic at New York University School of Law, and she supervises LDF's legal internship and fellowship programs.

Mr. Kemmitt joined LDF in 2015 as senior counsel. He is lead counsel in *Elzie Ball v. Darrel Vannoy*, a post-conviction capital case challenging Mr. Ball's conviction and death sentence. He also represents a class of Black schoolchildren in *Stout v. Jefferson County*, a school desegregation lawsuit in Alabama. For the past two years, Mr. Kemmitt has represented the Stout plaintiffs at trial and on appeal as they opposed efforts by the City of Gardendale to secede from Jefferson County Schools and create a separate, predominantly-white school district. Mr. Kemmitt also co-authored LDF's amicus brief in *Trump v. Hawaii*, which challenged the constitutionality of President Trump's ban on immigration from several Muslim-majority countries. Before LDF, Mr. Kemmitt spent seven years as an attorney at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia.

Jennifer Holmes has been named assistant counsel. Previously, Ms. Holmes joined LDF as the inaugural Eric H. Holder, Jr. Fellow in 2017. Before joining LDF, she was an associate at Covington & Burling, LLP, where she maintained a robust *pro bono* practice that encompassed criminal defense, economic justice, and immigrants' rights.

Finally, the latest group of LDF fellows - practicing attorneys who join the organization with support from various organizations and donors - are: Louis Fisher (Harvard Law Review Public Interest Fellow); Steven Lance (Yale Law School Public Interest Fellow); Zachery Morris

(Fried Frank Fellow); Kerrel Murray (Appellate Litigation and Policy Fellow); and Patricia Okonta (Skadden Fellow).

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