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LDF Applauds Victory Against Racial Discrimination in California Schools

Yesterday, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) [announced](#) that it had reached an agreement with California’s Victor Valley Union High School District to eradicate racial discrimination in its school discipline procedures.

As a result of multiple violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, including a measurable pattern of disciplining Black students more often and more harshly than white students; repeated violations of district policy and state law; and failing to provide “timely, complete, and accurate records regarding school discipline,” the district has entered into a voluntary resolution agreement with the OCR. The agreement requires the district to revise its discipline policies and procedures, institute a plan to ensure nondiscrimination in its disciplinary policies, and then retrain staff accordingly. Additionally, the district will have to provide compensatory education for those students — disproportionately Black — who were subject to its discriminatory actions.

In response to the news, [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson today released the following statement:

“We commend the Office for Civil Rights for its work to hold the Victor Valley Union High School District accountable for violating the Civil Rights Act and the rights, dignity, and futures of numerous children who were disproportionately targeted and harshly disciplined because they are Black.

“LDF remains fiercely dedicated to the proposition embodied in the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* — that discriminating against Black students by separating them from the other students, treating them unfairly, and denying them equal educational opportunities is fundamentally unconstitutional.

“Whether the means are state-sponsored segregates, as was the case some 68 years ago, or discriminatory discipline practices, as was the case in the Victor Valley Union High School District — where, according to the OCR, ‘the rate [of expulsion] for African American students was five times greater than the rate for white students’ — the assault on the human dignity of Black students is significant, enduring, and unacceptable.

“As we applaud the OCR for this essential work, we hope the news of the agreement between the government and the Victor Valley Union High School District puts other school districts engaged in discriminatory discipline practices on notice that such conduct is unlawful and will not be tolerated.”

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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.