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LDF and MacArthur Justice Center File Suit Challenging Mississippi District Attorney Doug Evans' Rampant Discrimination Against Black Jurors

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) and the Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center (MJC) filed a federal class action lawsuit today challenging District Attorney Doug Evans' extreme racial discrimination against Black jurors in Mississippi's 5th Circuit Court District. LDF and MJC are representing the Attala County branch of the NAACP and a class of Black prospective jurors in Evans' district. For the past quarter century, Evans' office, which spans 7 counties, has employed a practice of striking Black jurors with peremptory challenges at an extraordinary rate.

"It is hard to find a more egregious pattern of a prosecutor's office treating Black jurors like second-class citizens and rigging the jury system," said [Chris Kemmitt](#), Senior Counsel at LDF. "For 27 years, Doug Evans and his office have ignored the Supreme Court's ban on jury discrimination, and Evans just won re-election without drawing an opponent. At this point, only a federal court can stop such a flagrant abuse of power."

In every trial, attorneys receive a certain number of "peremptory strikes" that permit them to remove potential jurors without giving a reason. Since taking office in 1992, Evans and his employees have used peremptory strikes against Black jurors 4.4 times more frequently than white jurors. Even the Mississippi Supreme Court has taken notice, observing that the evidence of jury discrimination in one of Evans' cases was "as strong as they had ever seen."

Evans' misconduct has not only drawn the ire of courts in his home state. This past June, the U.S. Supreme Court condemned Evans' efforts to exclude Black people from jury service in the case of Curtis Flowers, a Black man who was sentenced to death by a nearly all-white jury. Reversing Curtis Flowers' 2010 conviction and death sentence, the Court declared, "Equal justice under law requires a criminal trial free of racial discrimination in the jury process." As Justice Kavanaugh explained for the Court, Evans conducted jury selection "as if Batson"—the Supreme Court decision barring jury discrimination by prosecutors — "had never been decided."

"It's too easy for prosecutors to get away with racial discrimination in jury selection under current procedures," said Jim Craig, Director of the New Orleans office of the MacArthur Justice Center. "We need a more comprehensive way to attack the problem. This lawsuit,



filed on behalf of members of the community being excluded from jury service, does just that.”

Read the full complaint [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 and 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.

The Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center is a national, non-profit law firm dedicated to fighting for racial, social and economic justice through litigation at the trial, appellate, and Supreme Court levels. Founded in 1985, and now with offices in Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Washington D.C, the MacArthur Justice Center tackles police violence and misconduct, the punishment of poverty, and the rights of people who are imprisoned and detained.

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