



LDF Joins Carlyle Parish LLC and Bradley Law Firm in asking Supreme Court to hear case about racial discrimination in jury selection

Along with Carlyle Parish LLC and the Bradley Law Firm, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), today filed a petition asking the Supreme Court to hear a significant case about racial discrimination in jury selection in the death penalty trial of Lisa Jo Chamberlin, a Mississippi woman.

In the landmark decision of *Batson v. Kentucky* (1986), the Supreme Court held that prosecutors cannot dismiss jurors based on race. In our petition, LDF and co-counsel contend that this is exactly what happened in Ms. Chamberlin's trial, where Black prospective jurors were dismissed at a much higher rate than white prospective jurors.

When challenged, prosecutors claimed that two Black jurors were stricken because of their answers to specific questions on a jury questionnaire. But it was later shown that one white juror whom the prosecutors accepted offered the same answers to those questions. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals nonetheless allowed the State of Mississippi to provide new reasons to explain the prosecutors' strikes, even though the Supreme Court has previously prohibited the use of such post-hoc justifications.

"The right to a jury trial is a cornerstone of our justice system, one rooted in the Bill of Rights," said lead counsel Elizabeth Unger Carlyle. "But for that right to have any meaning, courts must ensure that juries are free from prejudice, especially racial prejudice, which remains one of our nation's greatest barriers to equal justice. There is compelling evidence that when selecting the jurors who sentenced Lisa Jo Chamberlin to death, the prosecutors struck prospective jurors because they were black, undermining her right to a fair trial. We hope the Supreme Court will hear this important case and reaffirm its commitment to colorblind jury selections."

"This case isn't just about every defendant's right to be tried by a jury whose composition is not infected by racial discrimination," said LDF Director of Litigation Sam Spital. "It's also about the right of Black Americans and other people of color to have a fair chance to serve on juries. Jury duty is one of the most important forms of civic participation. Yet, throughout our nation's history, Black Americans have been systemically excluded from jury service. In a country that claims to cherish the equality of all, that's an unacceptable message for our justice system to send."