



**For Immediate Release  
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### **LDF Mourns the Loss of Mrs. Lee Porter, the ‘Mother of Fair Housing’**

The [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) mourns the loss of Lee Porter, a fearless leader in the New Jersey community who worked tirelessly to ensure pathways to equitable and fair housing for all. Since 1971, Porter served as the executive director of the Fair Housing Council of Northern New Jersey, where she fought housing discrimination and made safe housing a reality for thousands in the state and beyond.

Porter started her career in fair housing as a volunteer for the Fair Housing Council of Bergen County in New Jersey after she and her husband were initially denied housing due to their race. At the Fair Housing Council, among various contributions, Porter organized “straw-person” home purchases to help people achieve homeownership and shaped national housing policy reform, helping to address barriers to fair and equitable housing. As a skilled organizer and community pillar, her legacy has transformed the very fabric of Northern New Jersey and beyond. Her work was also instrumental to developing the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP), which provides funding to nonprofits to assist in cases of housing discrimination.

A pioneering civil rights leader, Porter’s commitment to equal opportunity and justice will be remembered by her community and the myriad lives she impacted as a fair housing champion. Throughout her life, Porter was also recognized and honored by numerous organizations including the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights, the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, and the National Fair Housing Alliance, where she served as a board member for 15 years. She was featured in HUD’s 2023 Fair Housing Month Opening Ceremony recognizing the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. Porter passed away on July 20, 2025, at 98 years old.

#### **LDF Director of Policy Demetria McCain issued the following statement:**

“Ms. Lee Porter’s life and legacy are illustrative of the transformative power of equal opportunity in housing. As the ‘mother of fair housing,’ her work was instrumental to the creation of key fair housing programs like FHIP, which has helped ensure organizations within communities have the resources necessary to address barriers to homeownership, housing access, and housing equity.

“Even after decades of tireless advocacy, Ms. Porter never stopped fighting for the full realization of the Fair Housing Act, powered by her unwavering belief that fair and good housing lays the foundation for a fruitful life. She was not only a light for residents of New Jersey; she was a light for the entire country. She will be deeply missed though her legacy will live on in those of us who will continue the long march toward truly fair and equal housing for all.”

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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.*