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LDF Announces Strategic Promotions to Continue Aggressively Confronting Trump Administration Attacks on Civil Rights and the Rule of Law

Today, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) announced a series of strategic promotions within its Department of Litigation as the organization fights to protect and expand civil rights amid unprecedented federal retrenchment.

This month, the following promotions will go into effect:

- **Amia Trigg** has been promoted to **Deputy Director of Litigation**, focusing on criminal legal issues. Amia was previously LDF's Director of Professional Development where she supervised attorneys and oversaw LDF's attorney training programs. She brings over a decade of experience litigating criminal legal issues, including leading LDF's efforts to reform Detroit's bail system and her time practicing white collar defense at a national law firm. Since joining LDF in 2021, Amia has also led litigation to expand educational opportunities and defend the right to vote.
- **Anuja Thatte** joins the litigation management team as **Deputy Director of Litigation**, focusing on political participation. Since coming to LDF in 2020, Anuja has litigated major voting rights cases to fight against the voter suppression efforts of the Trump administration and states including Alabama and Georgia. Among other cases, Anuja led LDF's successful litigation to preliminarily enjoin Alabama's 2024 restrictions on assistance for voters who are illiterate, disabled, or blind. She is also a member of the LDF team that succeeded in stopping the Trump administration's unconstitutional effort to try to require people to show documentary proof of citizenship before registering to vote.
- **Kelly Gardner** joins the litigation management team as **Deputy Director of Litigation**, focusing on educational opportunities. Kelly has substantial experience leveraging the U.S. Constitution and federal civil rights laws to protect and expand educational opportunities for Black students and other students belonging to vulnerable communities. Before joining LDF in 2025, she served in several management roles at the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, including as a Deputy Chief in the Educational Opportunities Section.
- **Arielle Humphries** is being promoted to Assistant Counsel and **Manager of Professional Development**. Since joining LDF in 2021, Arielle has litigated across all four of LDF's pillars. She has led litigation to desegregate public schools in Alabama and to address the chronic underfunding of Baltimore public schools. Arielle has also worked

on voting rights cases, challenges to unfair water billing, and efforts to curb qualified immunity. She brings this breadth of experience to her new role where she will support the professional development of LDF's litigation team.

- **John Fowler** is being promoted to Senior Counsel and **Manager of Professional Development**. He brings over a decade of experience in civil rights litigation and direct representation to this role, including his work on landmark settlements in a prison-conditions case. Before joining LDF in 2025, John served in management roles at both the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and the District of Columbia's Public Defender Service.

These promotions come at a critical time for LDF, which was founded 85 years ago under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall, who subsequently became the first Black Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Throughout its history, LDF has litigated cases in the areas of educational equity, voting rights, the criminal legal system, and economic justice that have set the modern standard for civil rights legal protection.

In the face of President Trump's hostile Department of Justice and his administration's efforts to roll back longstanding civil rights protections, LDF functions as a private Justice Department, filling critical gaps left by a weakened federal civil rights enforcement system and widespread attacks on the rule of law.

"Legal Defense Fund litigators are continuing to play a critical role in shaping the civil rights legal landscape," said **Deuel Ross, LDF Director of Litigation**. "Our current staff consistently proves why LDF is uniquely positioned to confront the myriad attacks on Black communities and civil rights as a whole. I am thrilled to work alongside my colleagues to shape and execute legal strategies that will ensure our future is brighter than our present."

"Our democracy stands at a critical inflection point, and LDF litigators have both the power and the strategic vision to enforce and expand civil rights protections despite the federal government's abandonment of its core principles," said **Christopher Kemmitt, LDF Director of Litigation**. "It is my distinct honor to work alongside some of the nation's sharpest legal minds who can, and will, defeat those who seek to roll back decades of civil rights progress."

Under the direction of LDF President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson and the entire Senior Leadership Team, including Kemmitt and Ross, these attorneys will ensure the organization remains well-positioned to continue protecting and defending civil rights and racial progress.

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights legal organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957, though it was founded under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall while he was at the NAACP. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute (TMI) is a division of LDF that undertakes innovative research and houses LDF's archive. In all media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF (do not include NAACP) and refer to the Institute as LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute or TMI.

