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LDF Condemns the Increasing Wave of Violence Against Peaceful Protesters and Demands Accountability

Janai Nelson, the Associate Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), issued the following statement regarding the death of Robert Forbes and the recent wave of violence against peaceful protesters around the country:

“LDF vehemently condemns the increasing wave of violence by white supremacists and armed white mercenaries against activists and everyday people engaging in innocuous acts, like posting flyers, peacefully protesting, and other constitutionally-protected activities. We call on the president, Attorney General William Barr, governors, mayors, and all elected officials to immediately and roundly condemn violence against protesters.

“In the last few days, multiple videos have shown people driving their cars into protesters, including in California, where Robert Forbes, one of many peaceful protesters advocating for police accountability, was killed after being struck by a vehicle. His killing evokes painful memories of Heather Heyer’s murder by a white supremacist in Charlottesville, who rammed his car into a group of a peaceful counter-protesters during a ‘Unite the Right’ rally. Just as the Department of Justice investigated Ms. Heyer’s murder, so too must it examine these recent incidents of vehicular violence against protesters – and determine whether they are reflective of a coordinated strategy to intimidate and assault those advocating for justice.

“The driver who killed Mr. Forbes was permitted to smoke a cigarette and remain un-cuffed at the scene of the incident, which calls into question whether officers did due diligence in ensuring that the driver is held accountable for his actions. Local officials must conduct immediate investigations into Mr. Forbes death and state and local elected officials must strictly enforce laws against those who menace protesters — and hold police chiefs and their officers accountable for failing to do the same.”

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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. 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. 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.

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