



**For Immediate Release**  
Friday, May 26, 2023

**LDF Media**  
212-965-2200 / [media@naacpldf.org](mailto:media@naacpldf.org)

## **Federal Court Orders St. Martin School Board to Fulfill Promises in Desegregation Settlement**

A federal district court in Louisiana issued a ruling today in the *Thomas v. School Board of St. Martin Parish* desegregation case. The court ordered the St. Martin school board to adopt remedial proposals put forward by plaintiffs. The Legal Defense Fund (LDF) and co-counsel Gideon Garter of Baton Rouge represent the plaintiffs, Black students and parents, in the class action lawsuit.

The court's ruling implements a previous 2022 decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals of the Fifth Circuit, which found that the School Board had failed to comply with a settlement designed to eliminate racial discrimination in teacher hiring and recruitment, student discipline, and access to college preparatory courses. Today's outcome is a significant step forward in the [case](#) and brings the St. Martin Parish school district one step closer to offering an equitable education for all students.

"We commend the Court's decision today to put forth a course of action to address racial disparities and provide quality and equal educational opportunities to Black students," said LDF Assistant Counsel Kevin Jason. "Today's ruling is an important step toward finally remedying the district's past and present discriminatory practices."

"We encourage the School Board to work with the plaintiffs and Black community to follow the court's order," added LDF Assistant Counsel Katrina Feldkamp. "The School Board has a legal and moral obligation to make St. Martin Parish equitable for all of its students."

"We are optimistic that this order will assist the district in fulfilling the promises of *Brown v. Board* and the settlement that the District agreed to seven years ago," said LDF Assistant Counsel Joseph Wong. "Black students have the right to receive the same quality education and treatment as white students in the district."

The court's order largely reflects the recommendations of LDF's clients and experts, who advocated for desegregation and equitable education in the district. The court's order, among others, requires the School Board to create a "grow your own" program to recruit more Black students, paraprofessionals, and others as teachers; adopt mentoring programs to help retain teachers and encourage students to enroll in advanced high school classes; provide specialized teacher trainings to discourage the discriminatory use of discipline; and adopt new restorative justice and other programs to reduce the district's over-reliance on suspensions and expulsions.

###

*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.*