

EXTENDED BIO FOR LEAH ADEN

Leah C. Aden currently serves as Deputy Director of Litigation at the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF). Since joining LDF in 2012, Leah has used litigation, legislative, policy, and public education strategies to ensure that Black people have equal access to the political process, economic opportunity, and environmental justice.

Leah was a member of LDF's litigation team in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, a high-profile case in which, in a devastating opinion, the Supreme Court of the United States struck as unconstitutional Section 5, the heart of the Voting Rights Act. Without Section 5's protections in place following the *Shelby County* decision, Leah has successfully led LDF's efforts to block a panoply of discriminatory voting changes such as to early voting and polling places. To document the loss of Section 5's protections, in 2016, Leah authored *Democracy Diminished: State and Local Threats to Voting Post-Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, which details state, county, and local voting changes — proposed or implemented — during the more than three years since the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County*, and she continues to track post-*Shelby County* voting changes.

Leah successfully represented Black voters in the following statewide cases: *South Carolina v. United States*, in which a three-judge federal court rejected South Carolina's request to implement its discriminatory photo identification (ID) law for the 2012 Presidential election; *Texas v. Holder*, in which a three-judge federal court blocked Texas's attempt to implement a discriminatory government-issued photo ID measure in 2012; and *Veasey v. Perry*, a challenge under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution to Texas's discriminatory photo ID measure, which it began implementing in 2013.

Leah also served as lead counsel in a Section 2 challenge to Fayette County, Georgia's at-large method of electing members to the County Board of Commissioners and Board of Education in *Georgia State Conference of the NAACP, et al., v. Fayette County Board of Commissioners, et al.* In that case, a federal judge and appellate court found that the substantial weight of evidence demonstrated that Fayette County's at-large electoral scheme, in combination with racially polarized voting, prevented Black voters from ever electing a candidate of their choice to either board, in violation of Section 2. As a result of this litigation, Black voters won district-based voting for County Commission and School Board elections, leading to the election of the first and second Black County Commissioners in the history of Fayette in 2014 and 2015.

Under that same provision of the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution, Leah serves as lead counsel in a challenge to the at-large method for electing members to Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana's 32nd Judicial District parish court in *Terrebonne*

Parish Branch NAACP, et al. v. Jindal, et al. No Black candidate has ever been elected to the 32nd Judicial District Court after facing opposition from a white opponent because the at-large system of election, in combination with racial bloc voting, prevents Black voters in Terrebonne Parish from electing their preferred candidates of choice. In 2017, a federal court found that the electoral method for that state court violates the VRA and Constitution.

Leah has worked with local leaders in other jurisdictions like Beaufort, South Carolina and Columbus, Ohio to urge jurisdictions to switch from at-large voting to district -based voting or some other alternative system that will provide Black voters with the opportunity to elect their preferred candidates..

Leah also advocates for the abolition of prison-based gerrymandering, the practice of counting incarcerated people for redistricting purposes at their prison facility address rather than at their pre-incarceration home address; and felony disfranchisement laws, which disproportionately prevent Black people with felony convictions from voting, serving on juries, and otherwise participating in their communities. In 2016, Leah authored Free the Vote: Unlocking the Doors of Democracy in the Cells and on the Streets.

Leah regularly works with allies in numerous states to prepare Black voters to participate in federal, state, and local elections and speaks to media (print and radio), law students, civic and faith-based organizations, sororities, and other audiences about issues related to Black voting rights.

Leah also represents a Black community organization in Tallassee, Alabama in its challenge under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to a state agency's decision to permit a landfill to open and expand its operations in a predominately Black community without conducting an assessment of the landfill's disparate and discriminatory social, economic, and health impacts on that community. She also has worked with other environmental justice advocates to urge the Environmental Protection Agency to protect against environmental racism.

Leah has authored or otherwise significantly contributed to numerous amicus briefs before the U.S. Supreme Court, including in Alabama Legislative Black Caucus v. Alabama, Evenwel v. Abbott, Gill v. Whitford, Husted v. APRI, Rucho v. Common Cause, and Department of Commerce v. New York, as well as other federal courts, including in Davidson v. City of Cranston, Patino v. City of Pasadena, and Texas v. EEOC.

Prior to joining LDF, Leah was a litigation associate in the New York office of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, LLP, having earned the prestigious Fried, Frank/LDF Fellowship. At Fried Frank, Leah represented clients in a variety of complex civil litigation matters. She also previously served as a fellow at the Center

for Civil Rights at the University of North Carolina School of Law, where she focused on public education issues, including school desegregation and education adequacy litigation. Leah served as a law clerk to the Honorable John T. Nixon of the United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee. Leah received her J.D. from Howard University School of Law and B.A. in History and African-American Studies from Columbia University.