



NEWS RELEASE  
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**Ryan P. Haygood to Lead  
The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice**

**Newark, New Jersey**—Today, Ryan P. Haygood joined the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (“NJISJ” or “the Institute”) as its third President and CEO. As President and CEO, Haygood will leverage his national expertise to advance the Institute’s cutting-edge work in expanding access to social justice and economic opportunity and advocating for juvenile and criminal justice reform in communities across New Jersey.

For more than a decade, Haygood has been deeply engaged in social justice advocacy on a national level. As the Deputy Director of Litigation at the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), Haygood has worked to empower communities of color around the country by ensuring an open and inclusive political process, better educational and housing opportunities, access to employment that enables community residents to compete in a global economy, and a fair criminal justice system.

A proud resident of Newark, New Jersey’s South Ward, Haygood succeeds Cornell William Brooks, who left the Institute this past June to become president and CEO of the NAACP.

Haygood came to Newark fifteen years ago from Denver, Colorado, where he was raised by a single mother. Since then, he has been deeply invested in his community, mentoring hundreds of young people through Newark’s C.H.O.S.E.N., a teen youth group that he leads with his wife, Charity Haygood, a principal at a Newark public school. Newark’s C.H.O.S.E.N. seeks to prepare young people for purpose-driven living by developing and supporting spiritual growth, character, educational excellence, leadership skills, community service, and financial responsibility. Haygood also works closely with other leaders in his community to ensure that government agencies, including law enforcement, are responsive to their needs.

“Ryan Haygood is a superb choice to lead the Institute. His reputation as a leading national voice in protecting and advancing the rights of people of color uniquely positions him to ambitiously advance our work championing equality and opportunity for residents in New Jersey’s most vulnerable cities,” said Douglas S. Eakeley, NJISJ Board Chair. “We could not be more excited about our incredibly bright future under Ryan’s leadership.”

“Ryan Haygood is one of the most talented and respected civil rights lawyers and advocates in the country. His passion for social and racial justice, coupled with his strategic vision, demonstrated service to underserved people, and disciplined organizational skills, make him uniquely suited to advance the Institute’s mission boldly,” said Ted Wells, Jr., a partner in Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, chairman emeritus of the LDF board and a founding member of the NJISJ board.

“I am honored and humbled to have this opportunity to serve the Institute, which is New Jersey’s leading voice for social justice,” said Haygood. “All of my life’s work to this point has been built around a fundamental

belief in the radical potential of people. The Institute’s mission—of challenging barriers that prevent people in New Jersey’s communities from realizing and achieving their full potential—is as salient today as it was when Alan V. Lowenstein and his wife Amy founded the Institute 16 years ago. I look forward to working with the Institute’s incredible staff to use all available tools to promote greater opportunities and to help build stronger cities and communities throughout New Jersey.”

At LDF, Haygood led the charge on some of the most important civil rights and social justice issues of our generation, while building and energizing community coalitions around the country to ensure sustainable outcomes.

As part of his work, and to empower communities of color, Haygood has long engaged in strategic and context-specific public education, legislative advocacy, and litigation, and coordinated community empowerment forums and trainings around a range of issues for community members, faith leaders, lawyers, and federal, state, and local elected officials.

Haygood twice defended the constitutionality of a core provision of the federal Voting Rights Act before the United States Supreme Court. In the most recent challenge, Haygood represented Black community leaders and clergy in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, in defense of a federal voting protection for millions of voters of color.

While at LDF, Haygood also successfully challenged the State of Texas’s implementation of the most racially discriminatory photo ID law in the country, in partnership with other advocacy groups and law firms across the country. Haygood’s vision for empowered communities through local, democratic engagement also led him to challenge Fayette County, Georgia’s discriminatory at-large method of electing members to its county commission and school board. The victory in this case resulted in an election in which Fayette County voters both led the state of Georgia in voter turnout, and elected the first African American person ever to serve on the county commission in its 200-year history.

Haygood also has led the fight against state laws that deny voting rights to people of color with felony convictions. His efforts led a federal appellate court to conclude that the state of Washington’s felon disfranchisement law unlawfully shifted racial discrimination from the criminal justice system into the political process, disfranchising nearly 25 percent of Black men in the state.

Haygood is a frequent commentator for numerous national media outlets on issues of social justice, including the New York Times, CNN, MSNBC, and National Public Radio.

Prior to joining LDF, Haygood was an associate at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, LLP. At Fried, Frank, Haygood represented clients in a variety of complex commercial and civil rights matters before federal courts.

Haygood received his J.D. from the University of Colorado School of Law and B.A. in American History and Political Science *cum laude* from Colorado College, where he was nominated for the Rhodes Scholarship, and earned academic and athletic All-American honors as a football player.

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**About the Institute**

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice believes that urban areas of New Jersey, especially Newark, hold remarkable potential to act as regionally competitive economic engines, while providing resilient, vital and attractive communities to their residents. The Institute identifies, analyzes and addresses the underlying causes of social and economic disparities and challenges the barriers that constrain cities and their residents from achieving their fullest potential. For more information, email [nmccormack@njisj.org](mailto:nmccormack@njisj.org) or visit [www.njisj.org](http://www.njisj.org).