



LegalWriting  
institute

## 2022 Golden Pen Award Recipient



### **Sherrilyn Ifill**

**President and Director-Counsel Emeritus, NAACP Legal Defense Fund**

The Board of Directors of the Legal Writing Institute (LWI) is pleased to announce that Sherrilyn Ifill is the recipient of the 2022 Golden Pen Award. Most recently serving as the Seventh President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF), Sherrilyn Ifill is an American civil rights icon and former law professor.

Her recognition rests upon her use of her voice (and pen) to call for change at each step along her career path. First, as a professor at the University of Maryland School of Law for over twenty years, she taught legal research and writing through a skills-based doctrinal class for first-year students, as well as civil procedure and other doctrinal law courses. Later, as President and Director-Counsel of the LDF, she showcased her ability to engage with the public. As a law professor and attorney, she has been a prolific scholar, authoring law review articles, a book, and many op-ed pieces. Her book *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the 21st Century* is “a masterpiece” in the literature on reparations. She has also produced collaborative and engaging work with other public intellectuals. For example, in the 2018 book *A Perilous Path: Talking Race, Inequality, and the Law*, co-authored with Loretta

Lynch, Bryan Stevenson, and Anthony C. Thompson, Attorney Ifill and her co-authors both grounded and elevated the ongoing national conversation on race, racism, and the role of the law and lawyers in society. Pointedly, Attorney Ifill's writing is scholarly but accessible, with newspaper pieces on important societal issues like affirmative action, policing, the Black Lives Matter movement, voting, and judicial nominees. Most recently, she authored an op-ed in the New York Times titled *Who's Afraid of Ketanji Brown Jackson?*, anticipating the ascension of the first African-American woman to the U.S. Supreme Court.

A Golden Pen Award winner's contribution to legal writing may take many forms, and at this time in our nation's history, Attorney Ifill's use of her voice (and, more importantly, her writings) to speak truth to power, telling the stories of many who could not speak for themselves, significantly advances the cause of better legal writing. As an organization that appreciates the power of words, LWI applauds Attorney Ifill's contributions to good legal writing throughout her career as professor, advocate, and thought leader. In doing so, LWI highlights the role that social justice issues and grassroots advocacy play in the legal writing academy. The pen is, indeed, mightier than the sword!

The LWI Board acknowledges the work of the LWI Awards Committee in identifying nominees and making recommendations to the Board. The Committee includes Chair Brenda Gibson and members Andrew Carter, Janet Dickson, Kathryn Mercer, Samantha Moppett, Dyane O'Leary, Suzanne Rowe, and Mark Wojcik.

The Golden Pen Award will be given at the 2022 LWI Biennial Conference at Georgetown University Law Center. Details are forthcoming.

