Never Before has the Work of the NAACP Been More Urgent

As we enter the second month of 2025 and the first month of a new administration governing our nation, a whirlwind of activities is swirling around us. The broad and sweeping Executive Orders signed by President Trump in his first days in the Oval Office, have created panic, worry, fear, disgust and confusion. I was besieged with calls and concerns about the safety and protection of our city's immigrants, the safety of our brothers and sisters in the LGBTQ community, the civil rights of black people, concerns for the safety of our Muslim brothers and sisters and health care for our senior citizens. Additionally, there have been phone calls, texts, emails and correspondence via social media platforms. Many are asking what to do about companies, franchises and corporations that are quickly ending DEI programs that have been so important for the uplift and progression of our people.

In Evanston and the North Shore, our branch stands ready to assist and aid all persons who are being negatively affected by elimination of DEI and other actions threatening their civil and human rights. We will walk with you, speak with and for you, write and publicize with and for you, and bring to attention any injustices that are uncovered. We have received a barrage of calls, texts and emails sharing grave concern about job security, the elimination of important services under the umbrella of DEI initiatives and the safety of residents.

One ringing sentence comes to mind from the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Well, I don't know what will happen to me now. We've got some difficult days ahead." We are most certainly living in those difficult days. And yet, our challenge is to do everything within our power to remain steady, focused and prepared. More than ever we need to be well-organized with a strategic and planned initiative for moving forward. The NAACP is without question, the oldest and boldest civil rights organization in the world. The urgency of this time demands that we serve as catalysts and leaders in protecting the most vulnerable, oppressed and hurting people among and around us.

President Derrick Johnson recently said, "It is outrageous that the President is rolling back critical Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs. DEI programs help ensure that everyone can prosper. It's clear that President Trump does not value equal opportunity. This is all part of a calculated strategy to redefine the role of government, privatize essential public services, and further discrimination. Elections have consequences and it's clear that this election has put a target on Black America's back." I contend the target is not just on Black America's back, but it is also on the backs of all those vulnerable men and women in minority groups within the nation.

There are any number of comments being made on social media platforms regarding the consequences of President Trump's Executive Orders. One order for the armed forces to end DEI meant ceasing all courses and curriculum about the Tuskegee Airmen. We learned a few days later that such action regarding the history of Tuskegee Airmen will not occur. Another order demanded a freezing of all federal grants and their programs. A federal judge has temporarily blocked this order from being carried out. In addition a group of attorney generals from 22 states and the District of Columbia filed a separate challenge in federal court.

In short, the barrage of 35 Executive Orders signed by President Trump included AI innovation, potential elimination of FEMA, challenging abortion rights of women, revoking the President's council of advisors on science and technology, elimination of DEI programs in the federal workforce and providing water resources for the state of California. Such a flurry of activity in a short period of time has created considerable concern. This frightens those who are targeted and it creates both chaos and confusion. There are some who operate under these circumstances. However, it does not mean those who operate this way are victors.

I read recently, “Executive Orders are not laws; The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which includes Title VII, and The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, which provided necessary amendments to Title VII, are both federal laws that are still in effect; and Executive Orders can be challenged in court to the extend that the Orders are in conflict with the law.” Judge Kimberly Cocroft, Columbus, Ohio. Knowledge is Power. It is very important that we understand what is unfolding in our nation. Through this knowledge we will be able to assist and aid others far more capably. The time has come for all people of goodwill to unite more than ever. Come together. Pray. Stand. Engage. Resist. Change.