Since my last writing in late January, our world appears to have turned upside down. In a moment, quick as the snap of one's fingers, a heartbeat, a flash of lightning or beat of drums carried by the equatorial winds of Africa, nothing is the same. Nothing. The rise of a new and virulent form of racism in the form of so-called white supremacy, has reared its head on the landscape of the United States.

First there was the mandate to dismantle and destroy DEI (diversity, equity and inclusivity) around the nation. This includes the elimination of Black History Month, Women's History Month, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and much, much more. Birthright citizenship in the United States was next. This legal principle was a governing point for citizenship in our country, throughout its history. Next came Federal funding freezing, the decision to eliminate the Department of Education, the creation of DOGE, the empowerment of ICE to sweep through the nation to chase down and arrest our neighbors who live near us, striving for a better way of life.

These issues were words on paper in January. They are all happening in March. Massive companies and corporations were quick to eliminate their DEI programs, perhaps in fear of reprisals from Washington, DC. They were soon followed by institutions of higher education who were also very quick to end their DEI programs. Make no mistake about it, the elimination of these programs also means the elimination of employment for hundreds and thousands of people. Then came the elimination of thousands of federal jobs across the country.

The barrage of orders and actions were meant to create confusion, panic and fear. It is never easy to plan and respond when gripped by confusion, panic and fear. As a matter of fact, it is nearly impossible for so many different groups who have been negatively affected since January, to even gather in unity for the purpose of planning and responding. So many wonderful organizations find themselves trying to sort out the mess that has been heaped upon them.

In the midst of all of this, I am grateful for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The NAACP has been actively responding to mess, racism, discrimination, denial of civil and human rights and executive orders since 1909.

We were disappointed with this barrage of injustice. However, we were not shocked or surprised. Racism never died. Discrimination, false white supremacy, white nationalism, white Christian nationalism, and the urgent need to find a scapegoat to blame personal failures, are all as American as baseball and apple pie. However, the NAACP is not surprised or shocked. Our national office has been active in condemning the layoffs at the Department of Education, preparing to defend students of color following discriminatory plans for the Department of Education, applauding the reintroduction of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and sounding the alarm about the perilous state of our nation. Lawsuits are being filed regarding election mapping. The NAACP condemned Senate confirmation of Kash Patel to the Federal

Bureau of Investigation and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. The NAACP also condemned the Trump administration's roll back of DEI programs.

We are not sitting by idly while our country sinks into an abyss from which it may be nearly impossible to return. We are active. That is true for the national NAACP and for the Evanston/North Shore Branch of the NAACP. We have also been active. We have expressed our concerns to Northwestern University about its decision to roll back DEI programs. We have met with a school district in one of our communities to express the same concern about their rolling back DEI programs. We have hosted five candidates' forums for the election in April. We are striving to help our community be aware of all candidates who are running, and to know more about their views on current issues. We have spoken with District 65 Superintendent Dr. Angela Turner and shared our concern and support about helping the district overcome several of its current challenges.

Our various committees are very active. The Education Committee led by Terri Shepherd hosted a month long Read-a-Thon for nearly every class at Oakton Elementary School. Our Environmental Justice and Climate Committee chaired by Dr. Andrew Wymer is everywhere, networking and helping plan meetings and public forums on a myriad of issues related to the environment. Our Civic Engagement and Political Action Committee led by Willie Shaw has been everywhere, involved in partnering with other organizations on a myriad of social and political issues. Our Legal Redress Committee led by Judith Treadway, continues to respond to concerns and issues brought to them by residents in Evanston and beyond. Our membership chair, Geri Sizemore continues to bring in new members to our branch on a nearly weekly basis. Our Religious Affairs committee led by Rev. Valerie Riley is set to begin working with all houses of worship in the area to increase knowledge about the NAACP and increase their participation in the branch. Our Housing committee led by John Fuller is also keenly involved in many different initiatives seeking to create affordable housing and end the trend of an outmigration of black people from Evanston.

We may not be able to change the world. We may not have the capacity to change our nation. But what we are able to do is make a real difference in our own Evanston/North Shore area. And if we can help ensure diversity, equity and inclusion in our area, if we can work to achieve justice and guarantee civil rights for everyone in Evanston and our surrounding towns, then that will make a major difference. Helping our local communities become their best, can then help our state become its best. And our state can then influence our nation and change its course from going south to heading towards the North Star.

This is who we are. This is what we are about. Please join us in our continuing journey towards justice for people of color and for all people.

Warmly,

Rev. Dr. Michael Nabors, President