



July 16, 2021

To the Residents and Citizens of Evanston,

As we celebrated this year's July 4th weekend and reflected on the themes of independence, freedom and liberty, that have been part of the language of America since 1776, it seemed quite important to offer words about a recent event related to District 65. Last week, it became public knowledge that a lawsuit was filed against the district naming Superintendent Devon Horton, Deputy Superintendent Latresha Green and Assistant Superintendent Stacy Beardsley.

Filed June 29th with the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division, the 34-page document was filed under the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In it, the plaintiff appears to suggest that the District's focus on equity, empowerment and educating children of color with the same advantages as white children, is a violation in the plaintiff's eyes, of her (and whites) civil rights. In the introduction, the words suggests that the

named defendants “threaten to stigmatize individuals by reason of their membership in a certain racial group and to incite racial hostility.” The suit also claims that “for years now race- based programming has overtaken District 65 in the name of racial equity.”

Over the holiday weekend, I read this claim that literally took me back to the very founding of our nation in 1776. It was then that revolutionaries in the colonies sought to free themselves from unjust inequities that dominated their lives. In addition, the claim took me back to the days leading up to 1861. It was then that Abolitionists sought to eradicate the system of slavery because of its unjust inequities against African Americans that had dominated their lives. Each of these moments led to unprecedented times, The American Revolution and the Civil War. While the first war gave freedom to white colonists and their families and descendants, it did not do the same for African Americans, their families or descendants. While the second war emancipated African Americans from slavery, it did not create a just and equitable system for them, or their descendants.

These many years later, 245 from the end of the American Revolution and 156 from the end of the Civil War, the issue of justice and equity as it relates to Race in America, remains a nagging and pernicious reality. And yet, in a small town just north of Chicago that sits along the

western shores of Lake Michigan, Evanston has engaged in a commitment to do something about injustice and inequity as it relates to Race. In this amazing town (at least from my perspective) residents, elected officials, organizations, houses of worship, companies, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, City Council, and public school districts are shifting us all towards justice and

equity. The change in the atmosphere is simply, seismic and a considerable breath of fresh air. For the first time in this town's history there are four African Americans who sit on City Council. Once again, District 65 has an African American superintendent. D65 and D202's school boards have African American women as presidents. One of our nation's premiere high schools, Evanston Township High School, has an African American Assistant Superintendent and Principal. One of the nation's most outstanding YMCA's has an African American President and CEO. AMITA St. Francis has just hired its second African American President and CEO. Northwestern University recently hired an African American Athletic Director. One of the best small foundations in the nation, Evanston Community Foundation just hired its second African American President and CEO. Evanston has begun the very first Reparations Initiative in the United States of America, to the tune of ten million dollars over the next ten years.

There are many who refuse to connect the dots, even though the clarity of the picture is as sky blue as a warm summer's day in July. The work of District 65 is not only influencing our students, but all of us who comprise the residents and workers in this town. We are all learning about the importance of equity, the need to engage in transformation that brings down once impregnable walls of division, in favor of a bridge that brings all races and ethnicities together. As they should, our educators are leading the way. Under the continued burden of threats, a vitriol of hatred through emails and letters, and even through lawsuits aimed at ending the long march towards justice and equity, our leaders are pressing on.

I thought it was important to share to those who agree with the lawsuit filed, you are in the minority...perhaps for the first time in your lives. And now, a great cloud of witnesses- African American, White, LatinX, Asian American and more, are rising together. We are not fully sure what this "new" future will hold. But we do know this, it will include a more just and equitable education system and town. And we should all be in favor of such a future.

Reverend. Dr. Michael C.R. Nabors, President