



January 1, 2021

Healthy New Year, Everyone!

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Evanston/North Shore NAACP, I'd like to wish all of our members and friends a warm welcome into 2021. Tradition usually suggests that people say, "Happy New Year." For the moment, let's refrain from the "happy." It is a new year and for that we can all be thankful. There are many (including our family members) who began 2020 with us, and did not make it to January 1, 2021. There are of course, hundreds of thousands who also began 2020 and did not live to see the first day of this new year.

For most of us, the older we grow it becomes apparent that life itself is not necessarily the gift we have been given by the Divine. Life is precious, no doubt about it. However, it is *how* we live and *what* we do with our lives that makes all the difference. The past four years and particularly the past year, have been filled with significant challenges for Black people since Reconstruction. Even here in Evanston and on the North Shore of Chicago, what is supposed to be a veritable enclave for Black people, has seen its own grave challenges. Before we heard about the Wuhan Province and COVID19, we were beset by; egregious disparities in public education between black and white students, significant housing problems creating problems for potential Black home buyers and renters, unacceptable inequities in the health care system causing a higher rate of disease, illness and death among blacks, and a timeless sin of injustice called generational wealth.

Then came the coronavirus, like a malignant disease sweeping across our nation from Seattle to Sanibel Island and from Maine to New Mexico. While COVID19 has been a tremendous and painful reality for all of the United States, it has been especially heinous for people of color. Native Americans, LatinX and Black populations have become infected, grow very sick and died at disproportionately higher levels than whites. Brilliant sociologists and academicians have pointed to the underlying factors for this reality.

Pre-existing conditions like cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, obesity, cancer, diabetes and other diseases are dominant among minorities more than whites. This

information was not just learned after COVID19 arrived on our shores. Black medical professionals have been naming these disparities for years.

As a graduate student many years ago, I remember protests against local stores in Black neighborhoods that were selling 2 liter bottles of soda and lining their shelves with every sort of product that was not healthy for people. Of course, they were also the only store within walking distance for many black and brown people. Food deserts are real.

The high cost of insurance often prevents black and brown people from immediately seeking attention when they have a health crisis. Many are afraid of being denied attention and others are embarrassed by not being able to pay the exorbitant fees and expenses associated with care. In addition, there is a significant percentage of black and brown people who do not trust the health care system. Health disparities are real.

Black and brown people still do not receive enough precise education regarding our own health care. This includes physical fitness, dietary regimens, annual check-up's and overall healthy living. Without question there remains a Madison Avenue marketing blitz aimed at black and brown people from liquor to potato chips, flaming hot Cheetos, Takis and more. Without even doing Ph.D. research, we know there are more unhealthy fast food places in black and brown neighborhoods than any other kind of neighborhood in the nation.

Health then, the state of the health of Black people in America, should be the number one issue we face in 2021. Of course there are still problems that dog our footsteps and that will also demand our attention. January 6th will be the day the Senate votes to confirm the presidential election. Everyone in our nation knows that the sheer folly of racism will have many senators voting against the results from November 3rd. Every single one of the senators voting against the election results must be put on notice. They must be named publicly as racists, anarchists and nothing less than traitors. The January 20th presidential inauguration itself, may not be without its own problems. Our black communities have already suffered seismic loss in small businesses, lack of resources for rent, food and so much more. Our children are being challenged by e-learning and its results may set many of them back by a year or more. So yes, there are many more problems we must continue to handle.

But health lies as the undergirding foundation to them all! We must be vigilant in helping our communities of Black people on the north shore and in Evanston, to become healthy. We must have houses of worship, sororities and fraternities, non-profit organizations, HBCU's, and schools all combine to nurse our people back to health and wellness-physical, mental and spiritual. As a branch of the NAACP, we are committed to working with local hospitals, black medical professionals, black doctors, along with any and all of

**our allies, in transforming our communities with food deserts into oases with healthy choices and healthy lifestyles.**

**May the year 2021, be one of transformation. Not just away from the horror of 2020, but into a brighter day, a better way and healthier lives. If you have not joined us yet, please click the link for membership on our website. Let's work together to heal, restore and strengthen our people.**

**Warmly,**

**Rev. Dr. Michael C. R. Nabors President**