



National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Evanston/North Shore Branch #3015
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President

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Out of town to bury my father-in-law in Princeton, New Jersey, my family and I heard about the Sunday night's shooting in Evanston on Green Bay Road. Our hearts sank as we learned one 17-year-old teenager died and the four other victims were teenagers between 14 and 18 years old. With a heaviness of heart, I eulogized my 91-year-old father-in-law and thought about 17-year-old Karl Dennison, still in high school. I thought about the 14-year-old in critical condition and the others who were shot and who will forever bear the marks of this violent world.

With deepest sympathy and prayers, the Evanston/North Shore National Association for the Advancement of Colored People extends our condolences to the Dennison family and a renewed commitment to the surviving teenagers' families. We concur with Mayor Biss who pledged that the Evanston Police Department would "do everything to get to the bottom of what happened and redouble our efforts at violence prevention." Yes, that must be done. But we must also do more.

There is no justifiable reason on earth why five teenagers standing on a corner in Evanston should be the targets of gunfire. The perpetrators who committed the crime must be apprehended. Every resource possible must unearth those who pulled the trigger(s) that killed and hurt some of our town's most precious cargo, children. The cavalier attitude regarding gun violence in our nation, the blatant disregard for the value of human life, the certain erasure of common values, and the insanity of a society that now accepts its young people's loss of life, are symptoms of a sick and diseased nation.

After our sorrow, after our condolences, after a desire to help and assist the victims and their families in any way possible, there is a rising tide of rage welling within. It remains unfathomable that our town (or any town or city for that matter) would be a target for such ignorance and ugliness. It is unacceptable that a response to which we have all become lulled into compliance, would be one of apathy or "another shooting took place in our town today." When our children's lives are at stake, when we are hit with a trifecta burden of dealing with a COVID pandemic, dealing with a racist pandemic, we are now forced to deal with a violence pandemic. Such a burden is so egregious until it is impossible for even the strongest among us, to bear it alone.

More than ever, our community needs one another. We need to support one another. We need to look out for one another. We even need to help one another raise this "village's" children. We must begin by naming this brutal attack and assault on our young people for what it is; monstrous, imbecilic and unacceptable. We must begin the arduous task of rounding up those who would engage in such shootings, disarm them and work towards reshaping their lives and destiny. In particular, our community's adults, seasoned elders and especially the leaders, must lead by example. We must not fear naming insanity for what it is; insane. Certainly, we can talk about root causes and social injustices that have created such a climate. No doubt that plays a role. But that does not take away from naming insanity for what it is; insane.

The fact that I eulogized my wife's father who lived a full, rich life to the age of 91, and that we now await the funeral of a 17-year-old, is insane. The fact that we have middle and high school students at risk of being shot as they stand on a street corner in our town, is insane. The fact that if we do not take this tragic incident and use it as a watershed moment to help us re-define who we are as a town, and to truly unite to save the soul of our community, then that would be insane as well. Sunday night has cast a long shadow upon Evanston, Illinois. The breaking of each new day since, has brought light, but the shadow remains. It is time for us all, to rise to the occasion, showing our youth and young people, and each other, that evil will not win here. Not in Evanston.

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. Michael Nabors,
President- Evanston/North Shore NAACP