

I am at once grateful and humbled by the Evanston/North Shore Branch of the NAACP. During my three-month sabbatical, the work of our branch continued. Our vice-presidents stepped up and did a wonderful job, along with our treasurer, secretaries and executive committee. During my absence, our membership meetings continued to be held and the work of our active committees was in full force.

No sooner had I returned than we were invited by the state conference to be part of a DNC program designed for the NAACP. The afternoon workshop featured Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett- Texas, Dr. Sheena Meade- CEO of The Clean Slate Initiative, Alexis McGill Johnson- President, Planned Parenthood, Kelly Robinson- President, The Human Rights Commission, Sharonne Arlinda Bradley- President- National Council of Negro Women, Led Saunders- President of AFSCME and the Moderator was Garrison Hayes- Mother Jones. The conversation was robust and each speaker shared the critical need for the NAACP's continued leadership as a civil rights advocate. Twelve members of our branch attended and spent the day together on a wonderful van ride to and from McCormick Place in Chicago. Many thanks to First Vice President John Fuller for his outstanding service as our driver!

In addition, I was invited by Mr. Leon Russell, Chairman of the NAACP and Mr. Theodis Pace, President of the Illinois State Conference of the NAACP to attend a press conference on August 18<sup>th</sup>. The conference announced that the NAACP selected Chicago as the venue for the 2026 Annual Session. We have already begun working with the national office and President Pace to assure that Metro Chicago will host the most outstanding Annual Session that the NAACP has had in many years. I have committed to President Pace that the Evanston/North Shore branch will work with diligence in doing our part to bring excellence to the annual session in 2026.

Let me also share just a word about my time away this summer. The sabbatical was my first in over forty years of ministry. Lily Endowment afforded me the opportunity to travel in several different locations as I sought to learn more about my family history. My initial research helped me determine that my family has had members who fought in every single war. Thus, my travels took me to Virginia where my sixth great grandfather fought in The American Revolution. I also went to New Orleans where a relative fought in The Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. I went to Charleston, South Carolina where I had five relatives including a great grand father and great great grandfather who fought in The Civil War. My great great grandfather's brother was killed in The Battle at Fort Wagner in Charleston. I did not go to Cuba. But another great grandfather fought in the Battle of San Juan. A cousin fought in the Navy during WWI and appears to be the first Negro to be buried at Sea in 1919. Three uncles fought in WWII, two more uncles fought in the Korean War. I

visited both Japan and Korea paying homage to the relatives who fought in those countries. I had two brothers-in-law and one brother who fought in the Vietnam War and another brother who fought in Desert Storm. To this day I continue to have relatives who are in the armed forces.

With the increase of unrest and bitter hostility caused by the rise of racism, it is important for our country to remember, this is our country. All people of all races have fought and died representing the United States. So many believed in the lofty goals of democracy and the unrestricted promise of freedom and liberty for all people. So many people arrived as immigrants from distant countries all around the globe. We are woven together as a magnificent tapestry of humanity.

My travels this summer convinces me that there are far more people of goodwill and kindred spirit, than there are of those who seek division and discord in our nation. I visited twenty-seven cemeteries and every single tombstone cannot distinguish between black and white, jew or muslim, rich or poor. I spoke in diverse arenas; in Quaker Meeting Houses, historic African Methodist Episcopal Churches, country libraries where folks wore "Make America Great" red baseball caps, synagogues, a mosque, churches and even in an open field gathering in McNabb, Illinois!

What I discovered is simple. We are one. And our job as an NAACP branch is to continue to advocate, speak up, stand up and fight until our nation embraces this reality. How long will we have to fight? Time. Will. Tell.

Rev. Dr. Michael C.R. Nabors

President