

GOOD AFTERNOON.

ONE YEAR AGO, I STOOD IN THIS SPOT AND DECLARED THAT DONALD TRUMP PRESENTED AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT TO OUR DEMOCRACY. THE PAST 14 MONTHS HAVE PROVED THAT STATEMENT TRUE.

IN RESPONSE, THE ACLU HAS PROVED FAITHFUL TO OUR MISSION AND OUR PROMISE THAT WE WOULD "SEE THE PRESIDENT IN COURT." NATIONWIDE, WE HAVE FILED MORE THAN 100 ACTIONS CHALLENGING VIOLATIONS OF CORE CIVIL LIBERTIES.

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LAST YEAR, IT WAS EASY TO VERBALIZE OUR COLLECTIVE OUTRAGE AND OUR COMMITMENT TO RESIST THE EMERGING ATTACKS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS, LGBTQ RIGHTS, PEOPLE OF COLOR, AND IMMIGRANTS – TO NAME BUT A FEW.

THIS YEAR IS MORE DIFFICULT. THE PROBLEM WE FACE IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF THE ATTACKS ON INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES.

THE PROBLEM WE FACE IS TRANSCENDANTAL AND REFLECTS THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S ATTACK ON THE RULE OF LAW – THE ESSENTIAL STRUCTURE OF OUR CONSTITUTION.

THE PROBLEM STARTS AT THE TOP. DEMANDS OF PERSONAL LOYALTY FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT, ATTEMPTS TO WEAPONIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AGAINST PERSONAL AND POLITICAL FOES, A PRESIDENTIAL INQUISITION ABOUT WHETHER A FEDERAL EMPLOYEE, VOTED FOR DONALD TRUMP. THESE ACTS ARE UNACCEPTABLE IN OUR DEMOCRACY.

EACH OF US IS HERE TODAY BECAUSE WE RECOGNIZE THIS ESSENTIAL TRUTH: THAT WE NEED TO FIGHT AND WIN THE SAME EPIC BATTLE WHICH LINCOLN EMBRACED IN HIS FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS: "TO PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES."

THESE LARGER THREATS, ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF OUR SYSTEM, DEMAND THAT WE INTENSIFY OUR RESISTANCE. TO PARAPHRASE DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING: THE TRUE MEASURE OF A PERSON IS NOT WHERE YOU STAND AT MOMENTS OF COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE. THE TRUE MEASURE IS WHERE YOU STAND AT MOMENTS OF CHALLENGE AND CONTROVERSY.

MANY OF US, PERSONALLY, ARE PRIVILEGED WITH LIVES OF COMFORT. AS WHITE, PROFESSIONAL, CIS-GENDER, OR MALE, WE MAY NOT BE AMONG THE GROUPS SPECIFICALLY TARGETED OVER THE PAST 14 MONTHS.

AND, WE LIVE IN A CITY AND A STATE WHERE MANY OF OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE RESISTED THE WORST OF THE TRUMP AGENDA.

THIS PRIVILEGE OF STATUS AND COMFORT DOES NOT GIVE ANY OF US A PASS. THIS PRIVILEGE DEMANDS THAT EACH OF US STAND COURAGEOUS AND TALL IN THESE TIMES OF GREAT CHALLENGE AND CONTROVERSY.

AND, THE COURAGE WE DEMAND OF OURSELVES WE ALSO MUST DEMAND OF OUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS AND IN ALL POLITICAL PARTIES.

WE MUST EXHIBIT THIS COURAGE AND DO ALL WE CAN, USE ALL TOOLS AVAILABLE, TO PROTECT THOSE SPECIFICALLY TARGETED BY THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION.

Although we cannot IMMEDIATELY REVERSE THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT POLICIES, WE CAN TAKE THE ESSENTIAL STEP OF INSISTING THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE ILLINOIS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION SUPPORT A PATH TO CITIZENSHIP FOR DREAMERS.

WE Cannot, at least today, REPEAL THE ANTI-LGBTQ POLICIES ADOPTED BY THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION.

HOWEVER, WE CAN AND MUST INSIST THAT LOCAL SCHOOL OFFICIALS ABIDE BY THE ILLINOIS HUMAN RIGHTS ACT AND ALLOW STUDENTS WHO ARE TRANSGENDER TO USE LOCKER-ROOMS AND RESTROOMS CONSISTENT WITH THEIR GENDER IDENTITY.

WE CANNOT, AT LEAST TODAY, STOP DONALD TRUMP AND JEFF SESSIONS FROM RE-LAUNCHING THE WAR ON DRUGS – WHICH UNFAIRLY AND DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPRISONED PEOPLE OF COLOR.

WE CAN, HOWEVER, INSIST THAT ILLINOIS ADOPT SMART JUSTICE POLICIES. WE CAN START THIS PROCESS BY LEGALIZING, REGULATING, AND TAXING MARIJUANA IN OUR STATE.

OUR RESISTANCE, BEGINS -- BUT CANNOT END -- WITH OUR DEFENSE OF THE MOST VULNERABLE AMONG US. WE MUST ALSO VIGOROUSLY DEFEND THE CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE ITSELF. WE MUST RESIST TRUMP'S ATTEMPTS TO ERODE THE RULE OF LAW, WHICH WAS THE CATALYST OF OUR REVOLUTION AGAINST A MONARCH -- AND IS-- THE BEDROCK OF OUR CONSTITUTION. // // FAILURE TO RESIST WILL SPELL THE DEATH KNELL OF OUR DEMOCRACY.

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WE, THE PEOPLE, -- ALL THE PEOPLE -- MUST INSIST THAT CONGRESS ACT AS THE SEPARATE, EQUAL BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT THAT THE FRAMERS INTENDED. WE MUST INSIST THAT CONGRESS PERFORM ITS APPROPRIATE OVERSIGHT ROLE -- ASSERTING THE CHECKS AND BALANCES ON PRESIDENTIAL POWER THAT ARE THE HALLMARK OF OUR SYSTEM OF LIMITED GOVERNMENT.

EFFORTS TO SUBJUGATE THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND COMPEL LAW ENFORCEMENT TO PROSECUTE POLITICAL OPPONENTS MUST BE RESISTED.

CALLS TO FIRE PUBLIC OFFICIALS -- ESPECIALLY WHEN THE PURPOSE OF THE FIRING MAY BE TO DISCREDIT THEM AS WITNESSES -- OR TO CHILL OTHER WITNESSES FROM STEPPING FORWARD -- MUST BE RESISTED.

LOYALTY OATHS FOR FEDERAL OFFICIALS -- INCLUDING NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS -- AND EFFORTS TO COW AND CONTROL FEDERAL PROSECUTORS MUST BE RESISTED.

WE MUST ALSO INSIST THAT CONGRESS PROVIDE MEANINGFUL OVERSIGHT OF THE PRESIDENT, HIS FAMILY, AND OTHERS WHEN IT COMES TO BUSINESS CONFLICTS AND VIOLATIONS OF THE EMOLUMENTS CLAUSE.

THIS IS THE ESSENTIAL JOB OF THE CONGRESS. AND WHEN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE NOT WILLING TO PROTECT OUR SYSTEM OF JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW, WE THE PEOPLE MUST CONFRONT THOSE MEMBERS AND DEMAND BETTER.

MAKE NO MISTAKE: OUR NATIONAL RESOLVE IS BEING TESTED. WE ARE BEING TESTED TO SEE IF WE HAVE THE FORTITUDE TO RESIST THOSE WHO WOULD DRAG US BACK TO BYGONE ERAS.

WE ARE BEING TESTED TO SEE IF WE CAN UNITE IN THE BASIC HUMAN DECENCY THAT DEMANDS LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL, REGARDLESS OF RACE, CREED, GENDER, OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.

MOST PROFOUNDLY, OUR COMMITMENT TO UNIVERSAL LIBERTY AS THE SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH -- THE AMERICAN IDEAL -- IS BEING TESTED BY THOSE WHO ASSERT THAT RESTRICTING RIGHTS TO A SELCT FEW WILL MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN.

WE BELIEVE OUR DEFENSE OF FREEDOM MUST BE INCLUSIVE; IT MUST EMBODY FREEDOM FOR ALL. LET US NURTURE THE RESISTANCE THAT IS IN THIS ROOM, THAT IS IN THIS STATE AND IN THIS NATION.

ONLY OUR VIGILANT RESISTANCE WILL ENSURE THAT OUR CONSTITUTION CONTINUES TO ENDURE AND PROTECT THE VALUES WE HOLDS MOST DEAR: /// LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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