

Greetings Beloved Community,

This is the first in a series of letters to our Tacoma and Pierce County community. My name is Jonathan Johnson, Branch President Tacoma NAACP since January 1, 2021.

I'm a long time resident of Tacoma having retired after 20 years of service as an Army Officer. While serving at, then Fort Lewis, I heard about a shootout in Tacoma's Hilltop community between soldiers and alleged drug dealers. Members from ten local churches teamed up to provide Tacoma youth a broader set of opportunities. I volunteered most Saturdays for nearly 20-years with Super Club bus ministry. I was impressed that volunteers from all over the city and their children actively participated in this community building project. Two of my children participated helping to engage with Hilltop kids labeled "at risk". After my last overseas assignment I returned to Tacoma where I retired and attended graduate school at Pacific Lutheran University. I was hired by PLU where I worked until retirement in 2018. I'm the proud father of two adult daughters and a son. In 2009 I Joined the Tacoma Branch NAACP attending General Membership Meetings. I served stents as the Second and First Vice President before election as President in November 2020.

On the sixth day of my two year term our country experienced an attempted coup d'état (commonly known as a coup). The stated goals of the assembled insurrectionists "take back America", relates their intent. To my mind, the American voters hired a new leader and a mob attempted to stop the peaceful transition of power. Thus, an attempt to take or overthrow the lawful decision of the American voter, by force or by scheme, is by definition an attempted coup. As a veteran, I never expected to see the US Capitol under siege, via the kind of methods foreign intelligence agencies use to topple governments.

Divisions are everywhere, and I am not referring to the 100, 000 troops currently threatening invasion of Ukraine. Nonetheless, this year the world holds its breath as Russia attempts to reconstitute the lost USSR. While many communities, including Tacoma, are reeling from ongoing violence inflicted on unarmed black men and women by, those sworn to protect and serve. I believe that a history of violence and oppression has shaped norms and beliefs making race-based violence an expectation. In spite of that, in 2020 people around the world stood in solidarity protesting the spread of a culture of police violence carried out against black people, even in Tacoma. If that's not enough, we are in the third year of a worldwide pandemic that worsens with contentious, often contrived, political, cultural, public safety and health science controversies. I learned in my first overseas command, divisions make it easy for our [actual enemy] to even the odds of defeating us. Divisions act like computer viruses diverting thinking power chasing ghosts. While we are distracted in meaningless arguments our real enemy shouts checkmate, game over.

As I begin my second year as Tacoma Branch President, I offer a modest roadmap consisting of our Mission and Vision statements. Take a moment to consider what it means to believe that there are viable pathways to success even when divisions are replicating as you read.

If you believe that all people in our community have value how does that change your actions?
Communities stand together when everyone knows they are included.

In divided times, it may be comforting to know, we restart with a set of common beliefs. When we know what we stand for we know who we are standing with.

We believe all people deserve access to all forms of power including physical, emotional, intellectual, and political.

What implications does our belief statement have on what you are willing to do?

Jonathan Johnson
Tacoma Branch NAACP
President