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by

Preston Love Jr.

I reflect on my recollections of the tumultuous times of the 50's and 60's. The tremendous political divisions, hate and racial divide. I am reminded by the events of that era: White hate groups, the killing of Emmett Till, in 1955; the horrible events of the Freedom Rider bus, that was stopped, boarded up and set afire with the Freedom Riders inside, killing and injuring Blacks and Whites, in 1961; the murder of Mississippi Civil Rights Leader, Medgar Evers, in his front yard, while his children and wife stood, and watched in horror, in 1963; the horrible bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church, in 1963, killing 4 young teenage girls; and even the assassination of the President of the United States, in 1963. Hate and division. Additionally, we had riots in the streets, as a reaction to so many racist acts against our community, including the dramatic Watts riots in 1965. During this time, a point arose where fair-minded people, of all colors and political persuasions began to push back on hatred and divisiveness. The nation began to attempt to heal itself. Evidence of this positive thrust can be remembered when organizations, both private and public, began to hire women and people of color, in professional capacities. Employers began to express that they were an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) organization. Roughly similar to today's DEI efforts. Personally, I was the beneficiary of those positive initiatives. In 1966, I was hired by IBM, along with a handful of other Black males across the nation, in coveted marketing positions. We were pioneers and opened a new chapter of inclusiveness in IBM, XEROX, GM and more. I had a very wonderful 15 years with the IBM Corporation. Those positive measures throughout the country were numerous but met by tremendous opposition from political and social conservatives and racial bias. Those organizational and societal positive attempts are analogous to today's calls for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and associated negative pushbacks today.

The death of George Floyd caused a national massive reaction to his death. One segment of that reaction was an immediate upsurge of organizational reevaluations of their diversity, their equity, and their inclusion policies and practices. Many organizations are initiating internal assessments and resulting new actions. Today, these measures are captured in the phrase, “**DEI.**”

In remembering the 60's, I recollect the negative push backs, from those who repeatedly attempted to, divert and disguise the arguments against the progress and to aggressive direct dialogue towards issues not connected. George Floyd's death triggered a series of positive responses as well. One such response is the University of Nebraska's (UNL), “Racial Equity and Inclusion,” Action Plan. The Governor and other conservative voices to this plan, is a throwback to the 60's. The idea that their push back has connected the issue of Critical Race Theory (CRT), is both diversionary and a disguise of what appears to be opposition to the value of the action plan. Let me be specific:

- The action plan advances diversity and inclusion across the institution. *What is the opposition to that?*
- Excellence in learning through Diversity: *What is the opposition to that?*

- Promotion of community and a sense of belonging at the University: *What is the opposition to that?*
- Building and sustaining accountability and eliminating racist infrastructures, **where it exists**: *What is the opposition to that?*
- Acknowledging the impact of COVID-19 on under-resourced racially and minoritized communities: *What's the opposition to that? What's the opposition to any of these? Speak plainly, Mr. Governor. If you are opposed, ok, but don't raise the national conservative boogeyman, **CRT**.*

I submit, CRT has nothing to do with UNL'S action items. First, CRT has become a whipping horse for conservative talk, nonsensical dialogue, on something that does not really exist. I have taught in Black Studies for 7 years, at UNO. The Chairman of Black Studies at UNO, Dr. Cynthia Robinson, has taught for 30 years in Black Studies, and neither of us have ever taught about CRT, and don't acknowledge it as a real-world phenomenon. The issue of CRT has been created as a "Boogeyman," by conservatives, to avert serious discussion. As University President Dr. Carter, stated clearly, CRT is not a part of the plan. The idea espoused by the Governor, that CRT has something to do with serious dialogue about race, ignores a factual accounting of race. There is no attempt, as the Governor suggests, shoving race down our student's throats. A factual, historical account of our history that includes the horror of racism, is just that, a factual account of our history whether the Governor likes it or not. Instead of inventing a new "Willy Horton", embrace the value of the positive initiatives. It is unfortunate for our Governor, and our state, to be known for being against Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Many potential students of color will choose another state to study. May I say to the Governor, our country is too divisive. It is time to heal, and that requires leadership, not political posturing.

My congratulations to the University of Nebraska, for attempting to become a part of the solution, instead of the problem, by standing up for the development of a better University. I applaud your positive move forward by listening, learning, and acting. I say to our readers, healing is in our hands, let's take a stand.