



AAAED Statement on Immigration

The American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity (AAAED) was founded in 1974 as an organization of professionals dedicated to the principle of equal opportunity in our places of employment, education and commerce. We believe this principle is the foundation of laws on which this nation was established, not the least of which is the United States Constitution itself.

By recalling a repudiated policy of racial and other exclusionary preferences into our immigration laws the President of the United States reportedly reprises the specter of bigotry, religious discrimination and racial divisiveness that this country shed in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This is not the social and political legacy that we need to resurrect.

Secondly, the purported policy of “merit” appears to be an attempt to obfuscate the primary selection process, which is based on national origin and race. The Administration’s relentless attempts to bar individuals of the Muslim faith from countries where they predominate underscore the effort to deny entry to entire groups based on their national origin as well as religion. Moreover, Mr. Trump’s campaign promises to exclude individuals from Mexico and to label them as “rapists and criminals” reflect a longstanding determination to deny entry and to export people whose origin is Mexico and countries to the South. This is, again in our estimation, discrimination on the basis of national origin and possibly race.

Thirdly, if the Administration were to select immigrants based on merit, it would not exclude residents from the entire continent of Africa, many of whom have aspirations to succeed that outpaces those of the American population. For example, according to the Census Bureau, approximately 61 percent of people with Nigerian ancestry age 25 and older had a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2008 – 2012, more than twice the U.S. rate of 28.5 percent. Thus, the unfortunate pronouncements about those of African descent are simply devoid of the facts and reflect pernicious racial stereotypes.

Our nation is greatest when access, equity and diversity are principles that undergird our immigration laws. The strength of this nation comes from the diversity of its national origins, and from the genius that migrated from all parts of the globe and built this country. Those origins include the countries on the continent of Africa, the nations of Central America and the Republic of Haiti.

On the weekend where we celebrate the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we must not shame his memory by recalling a past that is best left in the past. We must move forward as one nation, embracing its multicultural roots and the full racial, ethnic and geographic diversity of those seeking to become a part of this American experiment.

January 12, 2018