



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MATHEMATICIANS, INC.

February 13, 2017

On January 27, 2017, President Donald Trump invoked his powers through the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and signed Executive Order 13769 which says in part: “I hereby proclaim that the immigrant and nonimmigrant entry into the United States of aliens from [Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Iran, Somalia, Libya, and Yemen] would be detrimental to the interests of the United States [...]” We, the Board of Directors of the National Association of Mathematicians, Inc., oppose this executive order. NAM is an organization whose mission is to promote the excellence of those mathematicians from the African diaspora. Of these seven countries, most have populations in which Islam is the dominant religion, while three (Libya, Somalia, and Sudan) are in Africa. We as the Board of Directors find this executive order to be rooted in fear, couched in words which tyrannize as an antithesis to all we hold dear.

As Black History Month begins, we are reminded by the Africans and Muslims who have made an impact on those of us in the mathematical sciences. Indeed, the Libyan mathematician Eratosthenes (276 BC – 194 BC) quite literally changed the way we think about the world. Besides being the chief librarian at the famed Library of Alexandria and the father of geometry (he was one of the first to estimate the circumference of the Earth), he invented the eponymous sieve method which students use even to this day to determine which numbers are prime.

Perhaps more relevant here is the African-American mathematician Abdulalim Shabazz (1927 – 2014), who showed us how the love which stems from being a Muslim encourages us all. Born Lonnie Cross, Dr. Shabazz received degrees from institutions as prestigious as MIT and Cornell, helped establish the reputations of several HBCUs as department chair, and mentored countless students across the country. Dr. Shabazz received a mentoring award from AAAS in 1992 as well as a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM) award from President Bill Clinton in 2000. It is no coincidence that most of these awards and honors came after Dr. Shabazz converted to Islam in 1961. It seems very unlikely that our current president would have the foresight to fete a Muslim in today’s political climate.

We, the Board of Directors of NAM, will not sit by as ignorance of cultures and countries not mainstream to provincial American tastes continue to cloak the achievements of mathematicians from the African diaspora. As Maya Angelou said, “I refuse to allow any man-made differences to separate me from any other human beings.” We will continue to celebrate the lives of these individuals in the mathematical sciences. We hope President Trump and his administration will reconsider this executive action and do the same.

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