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Urban League Declares Civil Rights Emergency in Response to Trump Policies

July 17, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



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The National Urban League, one of America’s most established civil rights organisations, has issued a stark warning, declaring a “state of emergency” for anti-discrimination policies, personal freedoms, and Black economic progress. This comes in direct response to President Donald Trump’s policies, which the group claims are dismantling long-standing civil rights protections and the federal agencies tasked with upholding them. The

announcement coincides with the release of the Urban League's annual State of Black America report, unveiled at their conference in Cleveland, Ohio, on Thursday.

The report accuses the Trump administration of pursuing a deliberate agenda to erode America's founding principles of equality. It warns of efforts to impose a "uniform education system" and a "homogenous workforce" that marginalises those who do not conform to a narrow, exclusionary vision. "If left unchallenged, these actions threaten to undo decades of progress that have made America stronger, more competitive, and fairer," the report states.

The Urban League's report points to a multi-year, well-funded effort by conservative activists, lawmakers, and media figures to undermine civil rights policies. Marc Morial, president of the Urban League, described this as a calculated movement. "This is not a spontaneous shift. It's a meticulously orchestrated campaign that has been years in the making," Morial said in a recent interview. "What was once considered fringe white supremacist ideology has now embedded itself in the mainstream of the American right, with its roots firmly within the Republican Party."

The report specifically critiques Project 2025, a comprehensive policy blueprint from The Heritage Foundation, which aligns closely with Trump's current strategies. It highlights proposals for mass federal worker layoffs, stricter immigration enforcement, and legislative changes that mirror the administration's approach. The Urban League argues these policies prioritise a hard-right agenda over the diverse needs of the American populace.

The report also takes aim at major corporations, universities, and law firms for rolling back diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. It accuses social media giants like Meta and X of enabling "extremist" voices through lax content moderation while allegedly censoring Black activists and creators. The Trump administration, meanwhile, defends its stance, arguing that race-based policies are inherently discriminatory. Executive orders from Trump have banned what he calls "illegal discrimination" in favour of "merit-based opportunity."

Harrison Fields, a White House spokesman, dismissed the Urban League's criticisms, stating, "Groups opposing the administration are sowing division, while the President is working to unite the nation."

In response, the Urban League is calling for a "new resistance" to counter these policies. Morial urged other organisations to join the cause, while legal action has already begun. Since January, the Urban League and allied groups have filed multiple lawsuits against the

administration. Contributors to the report, including Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, stressed the need for proactive measures. “We’ve been on the defensive for too long,” Raoul said. “If rollbacks of DEI policies lead to discrimination, we’ll be ready to act.”

The report singles out the Trump administration’s efforts to dismantle the Education Department and weaken programmes supporting minority communities at agencies like Commerce, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development. The Justice Department’s civil rights division, described as an “existential threat” to enforcement, is a particular focus. The department countered, claiming it now enforces laws “fairly, equally, and without political agenda.”

Nevada Representative Steve Horsford, a report contributor, accused Trump of betraying the American people with policies reminiscent of Project 2025. Representative Yvette Clarke, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, emphasised the need for better public education on civil rights. “When an administration labels civil rights gains as reverse racism, we have a lot of work to do to help people understand their stake in this fight,” she said.

Originally intended to mark the 60th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the report shifted focus to address what the Urban League sees as an urgent threat to democracy. For many activists, these changes are alarming but not unexpected. Alabama Representative Shomari Figures, whose father won a landmark case against the Ku Klux Klan, framed the struggle as timeless. “It’s about one simple question: can I be treated like everyone else in this country?” he said.

The Urban League’s call to action is a reminder that the fight for civil rights remains as critical as ever, urging unity in the face of policies it views as a dangerous step towards authoritarianism.