



COMMENTARY: The Price of Advocacy: Balancing Immigration, DEI, and Self-Preservation

By: Christiana Best-Giacomini, Ph.D.

February 4, 2025



The past few months have been profoundly challenging as a Black immigrant woman. The uncertainty surrounding the new administration has left me unsettled, particularly given the painful history of the 2016 presidency. I braced myself for what was to come, fully aware that marginalized communities, especially Black immigrants, were at risk. When Trump made the infamous comment during his campaign— *“I didn’t know she was Black, until a number of years ago, when she happened to turn Black, and now she wants to be known as Black”*— it became glaringly clear that Black women, particularly those who had been at the forefront of supporting Vice President Kamala Harris, would be targeted. Shortly

thereafter, the derogatory rhetoric about Haitians in Springfield, Ohio, further solidified that Black immigrants were in the crosshairs. This was just the beginning of what would evolve into the mass deportation crisis we are witnessing today, even affecting those of us who are living in the U.S. “legally.”

As an immigrant who co-leads the NASW-NYC Immigration and Global Social Work Committee (IGSWC), I am surrounded by a dedicated community of social workers and professionals committed to supporting and educating others on immigration issues. Through workshops, webinars, research, and publications, we work to provide critical resources while also advocating—both directly and indirectly—for immigrant communities. This work is deeply personal to me, as it intertwines with my own experience and passion for social justice.

WEIGHT LOSS

**CARNIVORE DIET
TO LOSE UP TO
40 LBS IN 19 DAYS**

1. Remove all **plant-based foods**: eat only meat, fish, eggs, and eventually dairy.
2. You **don't need to count calories** or macronutrients.
3. Eat when you're **hungry** and until you feel **naturally full**.
4. Choose **high-quality, natural foods** and minimize processed foods and additives in your diet.

WEEK 1

Cottage cheese with sour cream	15 min
Chicken soup	15 min
Fish cutlets	15 min
Baked chicken thigh	15 min

WEEK 2

Scrambled eggs and ham	15 min
------------------------	--------

WEEK 3

Fish soup	15 min
-----------	--------

Sponsored by
carnivore.formula.care

Open

In the classroom, I teach future social workers through the lens of the core values that shape our profession: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These principles guide both my teaching and my work as a consultant for child welfare organizations. They are central to the work we do in academia and the communities we serve, and they align closely with the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). While these values have always been my foundation, the current climate makes it increasingly difficult to navigate the complexities of my role without feeling overwhelmed.

The weight of my responsibilities—as an educator, consultant, researcher, and advocate engaged in DEI and immigration work—has reached a tipping point. The relentless attacks on immigrants and DEI efforts in 2025 have made it clear that these efforts are now under siege. The political climate has shifted, and the threats to immigrant communities and DEI professionals are more tangible than ever. This realization forced me to pause and prioritize my well-being, recognizing that self-care had become a necessity rather than a luxury.

I made the conscious decision to step away and return to Grenada, my home country, to reconnect with my roots, my family, and my joy. I needed to disconnect from the demands of advocacy, teaching, and the constant fear of what would come next. During my ten-day stay, I spent my days at the beach, savoring the familiar foods of home like “Oil Down” and drinking coconut water and eating the jelly straight from a freshly picked green coconut. It was an opportunity to rest, not once opening my computer or engaging in any form of professional work. I found solace in simple pleasures, like attending a bingo game in the village where the grand prize was two goats and EC \$800 – an amusing reminder of the unique joys of home. For the first time in a long while, my competitive spirit took a backseat, and I had no desire to win that prize.

INTERMITTENT FASTING FOR SENIORS

<p>AGE: 55-60 16:8</p> <p>BREAKFAST:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrambled egg with whole wheat toast and avocado slices 2. Greek yogurt with berries and a spritz of granola. <p>LUNCH:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grapes and figs with broccoli, bell peppers, egg and brown rice 2. Lentil soup with a slice of whole wheat bread and a green salad. 	<p>AGE: 65-70 12:12</p> <p>BREAKFAST:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed green salad with avocado, tomatoes and cucumber with a drizzle of olive oil. 2. Hard-boiled eggs with whole wheat toast. <p>SNACK:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apple slices with almond butter. 2. Carrot sticks with hummus. <p>LUNCH:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lentil soup with a slice of whole wheat bread. 2. Mixed green salad with avocado, tomatoes, cucumber and green onions. <p>DINNER:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed green salad with avocado, tomatoes and cucumber with a drizzle of olive oil. 2. Grilled vegetable skewers with a side of quinoa or sweet potatoes.
<p>AGE: 70-75 16:8</p> <p>BREAKFAST:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrambled egg with whole wheat toast and avocado slices 2. Greek yogurt with berries and a spritz of granola. <p>LUNCH:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grapes and figs with broccoli, bell peppers, egg and brown rice 2. Lentil soup with a slice of whole wheat bread and a green salad. 	<p>AGE: 75+ 12:12</p> <p>BREAKFAST:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed green salad with avocado, tomatoes and cucumber with a drizzle of olive oil. 2. Hard-boiled eggs with whole wheat toast. <p>SNACK:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apple slices with almond butter. 2. Carrot sticks with hummus. <p>LUNCH:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lentil soup with a slice of whole wheat bread. 2. Mixed green salad with avocado, tomatoes, cucumber and green onions. <p>DINNER:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed green salad with avocado, tomatoes and cucumber with a drizzle of olive oil. 2. Grilled vegetable skewers with a side of quinoa or sweet potatoes.
<p>Sponsored by fasteasy.io Open</p>	

After returning to the U.S., I knew I had to continue prioritizing my well-being. My self-care routine has become more structured, with 30-minute workouts four days a week before meetings, and a dedicated 60-minute session with my trainer once a week – a privilege of working in academia. Sleep has become non-negotiable, and I’ve found peace in incorporating meditation or listening to an audiobook before bed to ease my mind. I am in the early stages of learning to engage in self-care without guilt, and I am discovering the healing power of art. I recently attended a performance of August Wilson’s *Two Trains Running*, and while it provided me with two hours and forty minutes of relief from my constant advocacy, it also reminded me of the deep-rooted history of racial and economic marginalization that many African Americans have faced.

The play’s exploration of poverty and social exclusion highlights the ongoing struggles of Black Americans who, after escaping Jim Crow in the South, continued to face severe economic disenfranchisement in Northern states. The erosion of civil rights protections, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964—which outlawed discrimination in public accommodations—along with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, serve as reminders of the long-standing systemic inequalities we continue to confront today. Discriminatory practices that have shaped housing, employment, voting access, and immigration—particularly the preferential treatment of Western European immigrants—continue to affect marginalized communities. It’s difficult to ignore how these structures continue to influence the lived experiences of both Black immigrants and African Americans.

With the signing of Executive Order 14173, titled *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity*, which prohibits federal departments from issuing contracts to private organizations that enforce diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) frameworks, coupled with the dismissal of two Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) commissioners, Charlotte Burrows and Jocelyn Samuels, the integrity of the EEOC has been significantly undermined. Once an agency responsible for upholding civil rights laws, the EEOC saw its capacity to process claims of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination halted. This erosion of the EEO Commission has been accompanied by mass firings of federal employees and DEI professionals. In light of these violations—alongside the ongoing mass deportation efforts, I am left feeling disheartened and uncertain about the future of this country.

The recent wave of deportations and firings has only heightened my sense of unease. I constantly worry about families who are caught up in these raids, especially knowing that a child can go to school today and come home to find their parents are gone. Law-abiding individuals, who simply want to work and take care of their families, are increasingly at risk. Many of these individuals, who are authorized to be in the U.S., can be swept up in these raids simply because of their phenotype or their location. It’s a disheartening reminder that, in today’s world, humanity often feels absent in the face of such injustices. The impact of these actions, particularly on immigrant families, is devastating, and it is something we cannot afford to ignore.