NASW CALIFORNIA CHAPTER STATEMENT ON 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

NEVER GIVE UP

By Janlee Wong, Chapter Executive Director

Throughout the arduous and lengthy presidential campaign, we were subjected to incredible negative forces, running the gamut from calling Mexican immigrants ‘rapists and criminals’ to calling for the prosecution and imprisonment of the Democratic candidate. With each outrageous tweet or statement, which normally would spell the end of a serious candidate, we witnessed delight from his supporters. Our instant-gratification-entertainment-gossip-no-facts culture was in full force, despite attempts to nullify every lie and misrepresentation, every “ism” and “ist” statement you could imagine.

As the eventual Republican nominee racked up primary after primary, we expressed outrage and hoped the American people would hear our outcries, our reasoning and the facts. Instead, reason was dismissed as simply ‘politically correct’ or a reflection of special interest groups that benefitted from the status quo. In this case, status quo meant we weren’t attuned to the frustration, anger and suffering of millions of Americans. With the Republican nominee’s victory on November 8, 2016, we suffered our own “Dunkirk,” the World War II symbol of overwhelming Ally defeat and retreat. There was great anxiety and depression then as now.

Extending this analogy, we now await the “blitz,” where instead of wave after wave of bomber planes, we fear attacks from a Republican Congress and President in the form of social program cutbacks and elimination, curbing civil rights, and appointing judges and others whose nomination will be based on a political and ideological litmus tests that includes narrowing definitions and exclusion rather than inclusion.

We should however continue the lesson from the great 20th century conflict which was first so eloquently stated by Sir Winston Churchill and restated by Hillary Clinton and many others: “We will never surrender; we will never give up.” While Churchill fought for the very existence of democracy and freedom, Clinton and we are fighting for our values, ethics, philosophy and culture of helping those who need our help. We do so by using private and government programs, services and benefits to uplift the vulnerable. Additionally as social workers, we believe in social justice, social action and political action. We will continue to use these beliefs and strategies in our efforts to achieve a better society and country.

And a final modified quote: We will fight those who oppose our values and ethics in helping others; we will be inclusive in forming a just society, including in the State houses, the Congress, the White House and the streets.

We are so appreciative of many responses from our members and social workers who said they want to take action now, including joining the political process and action groups. It’s not a
cliche but a shout out: Together We Are Stronger. In the near future, we'll spell out specific efforts and actions that social workers and all of us can take.