

## Stacey Abrams NKDIII Speech, March 28, 2026

*Hello Albuquerque.* Hello. Hello. My question is, who's running the city right now? So, I did somebody just try to trick me. And they asked me red or green. I know the answer is Christmas, okay? But I also know that we are in a moment where we do have to make a choice. For a long time, we could say red or green and we could go with Christmas.

We could say democracy was our intention, but we were going to figure out which way we were going to get there. Which route, which route were we going to take? Were we going to use **Google Maps**? Were we going to use **Apple Maps**? Were we going to get crazy and go ways? But we were all headed in the same direction. And then **January 2025** happened. And in **January 2025**, it became very clear that we weren't all headed in the same direction. You see, for those of us who believe in freedom, democracy has always been the route we were going to take. But our destination was justice. *Our destination was peace. Our destination was freedom. Our destination was power for the least of these.* We were on a destination to go into a place where people didn't have to worry about a roof over their heads, **clean water** in their taps. **Incarceration** was going to be a thing of the past because we were going to take care of folks from cradle to grave. That was the destination we were on. But unfortunately, there are folks who wanted us to go in a different direction. There were folks who understood that we were on our way, and they never wanted us to make it. They saw that we were seizing our freedom and holding our power, and they said, wait, hold my beer. And they instead brought **authoritarianism** to **America**. They decided that we were no longer going to have our individual freedoms. They decided they were no longer going to be accountable to the people. Instead, they were going to seize our power and change our rules and change our minds and change our lives. But I'm here to tell you, no, not on our watch, not in **our America**.

But the reality is in order to stop something, you got to know what you face. And across this country, we have watched the devolution of democracy in real time. You don't have to turn to the **History Channel** and watch what happened to the **Weimar Republic**. You just have to watch what happened in Washington D.C., what happened in **Minneapolis, Minnesota**, what happened in **Portland, Oregon**, what happened in **Los Angeles, California**, what happened in **New Orleans, Louisiana**, what happened in **Memphis, Tennessee**. All we have to do is look at what they've done here in **America**. And here's what they've done, you know, it starts with **step one**.

There are **ten steps** to **authoritarianism and autocracy**. **Ten steps** to creating a king in America. And it starts with a free and fair election, but they make sure it's the last one we ever have. And the next thing they do is they expand executive power. You have someone who was elected president, but makes himself a dictator. You have someone who takes what the rules say and decides to bend it

so it does what he says. But it doesn't work unless you get to **step three**, and that's when you weaken competing powers, when you get a *Congress that's complicit*. When you have people who know better but refuse to do better. And you look at the judiciary, the other power that we put in place. And at the local level, at the county level, at the federal level, we got a lot of judges fighting for us. But when you have a **Supreme Court** that is suborning the overthrow of our democracy, then the judiciary is inert, and it's impotent, and we got to get that fixed.

But then you get to **step four**, and **step four** is when you gut government, so it doesn't work for anyone. **Dodge** wasn't an accident. **Dodge** was designed to distract us because they dismantled the **Department of Education**, so our children with **IEPs** can't get the help they need. They went after the **Social Security Administration**, so our elderly can't get the checks they need. They went after the **Veterans Administration** and started firing our veterans and reneging on our promises and calling it necessary. They went after government because they wanted us to forget that democracy isn't about a term of art, it's about an action. We have a government because it's all of us saying we're willing to give a little bit of our money and a little bit of our trust, so we can get a lot for our friends and our neighbors and ourselves. And they are trying to break our faith in democracy by breaking our government right in front of us.

And to make sure it sticks, they go to **step five**, and they install loyalists. That's why we've got a **podcaster** in charge of the FBI, and a **broadcaster** in charge of the **Department of Defense**. It's why we've got **Pam Bondi** pretending she could spell justice. It's why we've got a snake oil salesman in charge of Health and Human Services. It's why we have a government not fighting for the public, but fighting for the power, and we can change that, but we got to know what we face. We've got to know that **step six**, at step six, they attack the truth. They go after the media and say that if you tell the truth, you are no longer a patriot. They go after our **artists** and say that if you show us who we are, then we are going to take away your freedom. They go after **comedians**. They go after anyone who will tell the truth, but they don't stop there because at **step six**, they have to fill the vacuum. And that's why you see **Larry Ellison** buying up every single thing he can and giving it to his child, so that we don't ever get to know the truth in **America** anymore. You see what they are trying to do to **CBS** and **CNN**, but I'm going to tell you now, they've got to see us later because we're coming back for the truth. And then you get to step seven. **Step seven** is when you got to blame someone for everything they've broken. And at step seven, they started where they meant to begin. That's why the very first executive orders were about scapegoating the vulnerable. That's why they went after **DEI**. Because **DEI is in our DNA** in America. Now, for a lot of us on the left, we were like, well, **DEI** is just that boring HR seminar I had to sit through. It's a Black kid going to Harvard, but no, no, no. The Right understood it before the Left did. You see, diversity means all people. **Equity** means fair access to

opportunity. Inclusion means respect for belonging. And so when they go after **DEI**, they are going after immigrants. They're going after Black and brown folks. They're going after the indigenous. They're going after the disabled. They're going after veterans. They're going after anyone who doesn't look like what they want, believe what they believe, and will fight against them to hold our democracy together. They know what they're doing. We got to see it and believe it and fight back with **DEI** because step seven is to go after us and convince us that we don't belong here. But **New Mexico**, you know that we belong. We built this nation and we're not giving it back. And then you get to step eight. **Step eight** is when they start to dismantle our civil society. *That's why they sue law firms and universities.* It's why we watch the powerful bend the knee because they were afraid that somebody might see them having courage. And the reason they went after those, the reason it worked was because **step nine** is the most dangerous step. That's when you normalize state violence. That's when you have military occupation of **American cities** and it's not front-page news. It's when you can **murder American citizens in Minneapolis, Minnesota**, and they say they can't do a thing about it. It's the fact that in the **United States of America**, our capital city is currently under military occupation, and we don't talk about it every single day. *The reality is they have normalized state violence because they want us to get used to being worried. They want us to get used to being afraid.* They want us to believe that if we open our mouths, we will risk our lives because they know that if you can scare a people, you can, you don't have to steal from them, they will give you their freedom to protect their futures. But in America, we've always said, no way. We will fight back. You will not take our democracy from us. And that brings us to **step 10. Step 10** is when you end democracy forever. Because you've done the hard work, you've seized the power and you've seized the media, and you've seized the imagination, and you pushed the people who were going to fight you to the side. And anybody who thought about rising up, saw you kill **Alex Pretty**, saw you kill **Renee Good** and say, wait, never mind, I'll wait for the next time. Because then you don't have to cancel elections. You don't have to declare a state of emergency. You just get **Texas** to rewrite the rules and change their line. You get **Missouri** to change their map. You get **Florida and North Carolina** to redraw the lines. You seize **Fulton County, Maricopa County ballots**. And you try to pass a **save act** so you can save your power and steal our futures. You end democracy for everyone.

But hear me clearly, **Albuquerque**, if there are ten steps that they have taken, and they've taken all ten, they've taken the ten steps to pull **our democracy into authoritarianism**. They have done their best to make the man sitting in the White House an autocrat. But if there are ten steps to authoritarianism and autocracy, I'm here to tell you, there are **ten steps to freedom and power**, and we're going to take every single one. There are ten steps to freedom and power. And our first step we took when we got here today, we committed to believing that democracy is ours. This nation is ours,

and they are not taking it from us. We start with commit. *Say, commit.* Second is that we share. *Say, share.* We are going to tell people who didn't know they should be here that we're going to be there for them anyway. We're going to share the truth, and we're going to share the dream, and we're going to share the power, and we're going to share the work because we have a nation to save. *Say, save.* We're going to organize. *Say, organize.* Yes, we will come together by the thousands for **no kings**. But y'all are going to come together by the tens and twenties, and you're going to go to the homeless shelters and make certain that people without know that there's something to fight for. You're going to go to the **Native American** communities that you drive past and you're going to stop your car and say, how can I help? We're going to organize ourselves to show up after today because they need to know that no kings is not an idea, it's a dream and it's a truth and it's a reality. So we're going to organize, and then we're going to mobilize. *Say, mobilize.* We're going to mobilize to stop data centers from stealing our power without investing in our people. We're going to mobilize to make certain that our children have an education that tells them the truth. **Rosa Parks** is not an illusion. **Dolores Huerta** is not a myth. They need to know our history and know our truth to know our future. We are going to mobilize. *Say, mobilize.* We're going to make sure there are books and not bombs, but we're going to make sure children have those books. *Say, mobilize.* We're going to show up for no kings, but then we're going to show up for our neighbors. *Say, mobilize.* And when we mobilize, then we're going to litigate. *Say, litigate.* Litigate isn't just about the lawsuits that **Democracy Forward** and our labor unions are filing. Litigation is about arguing the point. We don't have to change their minds, but we can't lose our minds by forgetting our truth. *Say, litigate.* Litigate. We are going to tell the people that we are right, that democracy is ours, and they may want us to get used to stealing it from us, but we're here to tell them, we will fight them in the concept of ideas. We're going to tell the truth about why we are who we are. And then, we're going to do my next favorite step. We're going to disrupt. *Say, disrupt.* Disrupt. We're going to hold up our cameras, and we're not going to just take selfies, we're going to take pictures of how **they're destroying America** because they will not destroy the truth. We're going to show up where **ICE** is and we're going to take pictures of them with or without their masks on. We're going to show up at those community meetings, at those city council meetings, at those county commission meetings because they're not doing this alone in **DC**. They've got folks at the state and local level doing this with them, and they all need to know we're paying attention. We're going to disrupt. *Say, disrupt.* We will not let them steal our futures by convincing us that we've already lost. Because that takes us to the next step. *Say, deny.* Deny. We're going to deny them the ability to take our story from us. They will not take our truth from us. They will not take our power from us. I talk about **DEI** because they told me not to. I talk about **authoritarianism** because they told me to shut up. I talk about **climate change** because we're going to fix this planet. I'm going to talk about it and be about it because I will deny them the authority to change who I am and what I

know. No kings, *say, deny*. And if we've done those things, then our next job is to engage. *Say, engage*. Engage. **Government is about shared power**. It's also about borrowed power. We have given some people we've met, that we talked to for maybe 15 minutes. We said, I'm going to let you borrow my power. I'm going to let you stand in my stead. I met one of your **soil conservation supervisors** yesterday at the airport. I think her name is **Supervisor Valencia**. And she handed me her card and she said, this is a small job and I'm proud to serve. And I looked at her and I was like, there are no small jobs in government. Anybody who's asked you for their vote needs to ask you about your values. And if they don't do their job, they need to lose it, but give them a chance to prove you right. Show up and engage. *Say, engage*. If you have a **city council meeting**, show up at that meeting. *Say, engage*. If you've got a school board that's not serving your children, *say, engage*. If you have a governor who needs to find a worthy successor, *say, engage*. If you want to keep universal childcare here in **New Mexico**, *say, engage*. Because once we've engaged, we get to the **ninth step**, and that's elect. *Say, elect*.

Y'all may have heard we've got some midterms coming up. We've got a chance to take back **Congress**, not just the House, but if they keep talking, we're going to take the **Senate**, too. But the reality is, if we only focus on **DC**, we are going to miss the plot. Because **DC** is not the problem. It's where they put everybody else that believes in this authoritarian regime. Every eight years in the state of **New Mexico**, you got to change your minds and say, oops, never mind, we didn't like progress, let's go backwards. But this time, y'all got **Deb Haaland** waiting for you. Let's get it done. **Let's elect!** We've got to elect people who believe in the people, not the power. We've got to elect people who believe in the future, not the past. We've got to elect people who believe that **DEI is in our DNA** and are not afraid to say, I will stand up for the **vulnerable**. I will stand up for immigrants. I will stand up for those who've been left out and left behind. We've got to elect. *Say, elect*. That means we're going to show up in primaries, and we're going to show up in runoffs, and we're going to show up in November, and then we're going to show up the next day and remind them that we put them there, and we expect them to do their job. *Say, elect*. Elect. And if we do those things, if we commit, *say, commit*. If we share, say, share. If we organize, *say, organize*. If we mobilize, *say, mobilize*. If we are willing to litigate, *say, litigate*. If we are willing to disrupt, say, disrupt. If we will deny, say, deny. If we will engage, *say, engage*. If we will elect, *say, elect*. If we will do those nine steps, then **step 10** is the best step ever because that's when we demand the democracy we deserve. **So Albuquerque and no kings, let's get it done!**