

NYTS Responds to Charlottesville VA

Within the last few days, Charlottesville VA, witnessed some of the most violent effects of the evil perpetuated by those who adhere to the white supremacist ideology. The notion of white supremacy has unfortunately been deeply embedded in American history and culture and used as a method to alienate, oppress and marginalize people who do not fulfill their morphological criteria. This evil has established its painful and horrific grip in even more insidious ways since the election of this new president of the United States.

Since the early 1900s, NYTS, as an educational institution, has been a vanguard of resistance to this hate filled ideology and has consistently fought for equality and justice for all. The 21st century has shown us that the struggle against evil is far from over. Similar to deadly viruses that can destroy human existence, religious bigotry, racism, hate, xenophobia, and other social pathologies have morphed into more virulent forms and have appeared in structures and policies led by elements at the highest level of our government.

As religious and theological educators, we are fully aware of the liberating effects of education and its ability to resist the demonic forces at every level. Therefore, in this new academic year we are creating new ways to make our courses more relevant to the context of our students. We are intentional in empowering our students to address the chaos, hate and national instability that have permeated religious institutions and structures of power within society.

Leadership is being redefined in negative ways throughout our nation. We are beginning to see what Bass et al call pseudo-transformational leadership, in which division, a lack of moral authority, injustice and personal greed defines those who lead. This fall, our faculty members, trustees, students, graduates constituencies throughout the city and our colleagues in institutions of higher education will grapple with the challenges of leadership, and determine the best pedagogical methods and practices in addressing the void in leadership that our nation now faces. We must change the narrative and create authentic and transformational leaders in our religious and educational institutions, homes, and corporate settings. *We need to build new coalitions among marginalized groups to address the issues that are destroying the fiber of decency, morality, and sanity.*

Our students and graduates are in pulpits and serve in many other roles in which they have the capacity to influence and impact people. As an institution of higher education, we are committed to looking for new ways to equip these students to lead and empower a new generation with the tools necessary to carry on the struggle and fill the void in leadership that we are currently experiencing. The leadership crisis facing America has created opportunities for educational institutions to reevaluate how they prepare women and men to be change agents. Our mission especially in this academic year is to become the voice of hope and liberation that so many need to hear.