

## **NJALL Statement Against Bigotry and Violence**

The New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning wants to make clear that we stand by our brothers and sisters who are facing the brunt of the racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia that has marked the post-election period. As an organization we denounce such behavior as at odds with our standing concern for the health, safety and happiness of our diverse society. Adult education has a long history of fighting for social justice, and this moment calls for a renewed commitment to the field's democratic and egalitarian values. To honor the heritage of the brave learners and teachers that came before us, we must stand up to bigotry and work together to make our communities safe and welcoming.

As you are aware, there have been an alarming number of reports of violence and intimidation targeting selected communities all across the country. We have heard about countless public acts and about more personal forms of aggression carried out by roommates and classmates. It seems that no place has been spared overt and inflammatory acts of bigotry.

African-Americans have been hung in effigy, been called racial slurs to their faces and had their property defaced with racist graffiti. People have been told "get ready to start picking cotton again" and told to move to the back of the bus. Students in one school in Pennsylvania walked down the halls with a Trump sign shouting "White Power." This is not an isolated act, as assertions of white power and white supremacy litter social media. The KKK has already announced a victory parade.

In addition to anger and bigotry aimed at African-Americans, immigrants and US citizens alike have been told to "go back to their country." Children as young as kindergarten have been heard chanting "build the wall!" at their classmates who appear to be immigrants. Muslims, and individuals whom bigots presume to be Muslims, have been physically attacked and threatened with additional violence. Incidents of anti-Semitism have also been reported, with swastikas painted on store fronts and some Nazi flags have been seen flying.

Women have been groped and have been told that now it is legal to sexually harass them. You can even buy hats that repeat Trump's infamous words about grabbing women by their genitalia. In addition, gays, lesbians and transgender people have also been the target of hateful language and threats. Rainbow flags have been set alight while still attached to homes, and cars have been destroyed in order to send the message that the LGBTQ community is not welcome and cannot feel safe.

None of this bigotry is new, but the sheer amount and intensity of the expressions of this hatred has fundamentally changed the country. Almost immediately, millions of our fellow Americans have started to feel increasingly afraid and vulnerable. Now is the time for all of us to stand up to bigotry, intimidation and violence.

Please contact NJALL if you have any information you would like to share, if you have ideas for actions that we can take to move forward, or if you simply need a place to connect with others who share your concerns.

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