

# North Park Theological Seminary Faculty Statement on Race and the Justice System

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*February 2015*

**O**ver recent months, the undersigned members of NPTS faculty have formulated the following statement in response to the debates in the nation concerning race and the justice system. We were moved to do so because of the tragic incidents in Ferguson and elsewhere, and we wished to add our own voices to others on the North Park campus and in the Evangelical Covenant Church calling for change. We also noted and supported the engagement of many of our own students in actions calling for just treatment for all. This statement is far from the first to be issued on this topic in the world of theological education, but we hope that to publish our statement now is all the more timely in a context where the media news cycle is gradually prioritizing other concerns and paying less attention to these matters.

As faculty of North Park Theological Seminary we join our voice to those of our university, denomination, neighborhood, city, and nation and declare unequivocally: Black lives matter.

We affirm the dignity of every human being as made in the image of God, created to flourish physically, emotionally, spirituality, socially, culturally, and economically. As one body in Christ, if one part of the body suffers we all suffer; if one part of the body cannot breathe, none of us can breathe. The outcry heard on our campus and our streets demonstrates that the body of Christ cannot breathe. Violence against Black lives without sufficient cause or accountability points to a broken system and demands justice.

We affirm the biblical witness that God desires justice on earth (Gen-

esis 18:19; Deuteronomy 16:19–20; Amos 5:15–24), that Christ himself is the servant who proclaims justice to the nations (Matthew 12:18–21; cf. Isaiah 41:1–3) and whose gospel puts to death hostility between races (Ephesians 2:14–16), and that the Spirit intercedes as we pray that equality before the law be realized (Romans 8:26–27). When our institutions, our churches, and especially our justice system, do not align with these values, the systems—and not the values—are at fault.

As a seminary we support nonviolent forms of civil disobedience that show solidarity with victims of power abuses and that refuse to perpetuate the very cycles of violence that spawn injustice. We commit to striving toward creating safe places for dialogue and conversation on the topic of racial justice in co-curricular activities, in our classrooms, and in our community life. We as faculty acknowledge that the toil for justice is arduous and long. Nevertheless, Christians must not ignore any injustice; therefore, we are committed in our vocations as educators to teach and embody God’s heart for justice on our campus, in our city, and in the world.

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