



NWSA Statement on Charlottesville, Virginia

The National Women's Studies Association denounces the actions of white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia last weekend that terrorized that community and shocked the entire country. We further condemn the actions of James Alex Fields, Jr., who drove into a crowd of counter-protesters killing 32-year old Heather Heyer and injuring at least 19 others, and the stick-wielding vigilantes that viciously attacked and beat a young Black man, De'Andre Harris in a nearby parking structure. We also condemn threats made against local synagogues, and the use of Nazi-era slogans such as "blood and soil" and "Jews will not replace us" at these protests.

White supremacy and fascism have always been intricately connected with misogyny, patriarchy, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, anti-Semitism, and settler-colonial logics. This fact is evidenced both by the make up of those who rallied last weekend—primarily young, white, able-bodied, cisgender men—and the messages promoted at the rally and by those supporting it, which included anti-woman and anti-LGBT slogans and statements. The NWSA believes that ending white supremacy is a primary feminist political objective. The Combahee River Collective, whose 40th anniversary we will honor at our annual conference in November, wrote in their famous Black Feminist Statement in 1977: “we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of an integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.” That commitment remains just as vital today.

We praise cities such as Baltimore, where our convention will be held this year, for tearing down statues honoring leaders of the confederacy as an important symbolic gesture to denounce white supremacist monuments in the United States that pay homage to pro-slavery ideas and the defenders of slavery. However, symbolic gestures are not enough. The present legacy of white supremacy and the Confederate and U.S. commitment to the system of chattel slavery remains alive and well in the existence of the prison industrial complex. The 13th amendment of the U.S. constitution essentially allows legal slavery inside prisons. Those prisons are predominately populated by African Americans and other people of color, and a steady increase in the number of incarcerated women. Without material steps to end that system, white supremacy and the misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, anti-Semitism, class exploitation, and settler-colonial logics it engenders will continue. The NWSA sends condolences to the families and communities of the most recent victims of white supremacist violence in Charlottesville and affirms its commitment to feminist values that see the end to white supremacy as a top priority.

We know that white supremacists seek to instill fear and leverage power using harassment, violence, and the threat of violence. We encourage NWSA members to join together and raise their voices in the wake of these threats even as we recognize that some of our members face greater risk than others in speaking out. We know that intersectional feminist analyses offer the frameworks our campuses and communities need to challenge white supremacist ideologies. We applaud our colleagues at University of Virginia and their courageous students who spoke truth in the face of violence when a hateful mob of fascists marched through their campus bearing torches, shouting Nazi slogans and attacking students.

We know that our members embrace our mission to promote a more just world in which all persons can develop to their fullest potential—one free from racist ideologies, systems of privilege or structures that oppress or exploit some for the advantage of others. Now more than ever we need to recommit ourselves to this vision and engage in meaningful actions that can advance our goals.

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