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# PTS RECEIVES GRANT TO ADDRESS COVID-19'S IMPACT ON BLACK AND LATINX COMMUNITIES IN METRO-PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary's **Metro-Urban Institute** has received a \$150,000 grant from the **Henry Luce Foundation** to work with church-sector and community-based organizational networks in metro-Pittsburgh to: (1) collect and curate stories and data illuminating COVID-19's impact on Black and Latinx communities; and (2) reinforce capacities within and between ministries and organizations to bridge resources (e.g., computers for public school students being taught remotely, and direct assistance for agencies responding to intensified local needs). The title of the project, facilitated by the Seminary's Metro-Urban Institute, is "Sharing Technology and Sharing Stories: Listening, Learning, and Responding to Differential, Race-based Impacts of COVID-19."



Professor of Urban Ministry and former Director of the Metro-Urban Institute the Rev. Dr. R. Drew Smith—the project's lead investigator—elaborates: "We will gather stories from at-risk communities to create four video narratives, each focused on a particular area of the virus's impact in Pittsburgh's Black and Latinx communities: access to health care, access to technology, the learning needs of children, and the situation of essential workers."

Produced and disseminated in conjunction with Pittsburgh-based media organizations, the videos will be viewed this summer and fall in conjunction with virtual Town Halls. Broader distribution will occur via the networks of the Gamaliel Foundation and the Transatlantic Roundtable on Religion and Race (co-convened by Dr. Smith).

Co-investigator of the grant (and former PTS ethics professor) the Rev. Dr. Deirdre Hainsworth comments on the project's concern with bridging resources: "Though remote teaching of Pittsburgh public school students was delayed till April 20, thousands of students still needed computers at the start of classes. Our grant project will collaborate with local partners to help provide funding for computers for students in need. Additionally, we will provide direct funding and technical assistance to local agencies supporting youth access to technology and learning." This aspect of the grant will receive expert guidance by Dr. Hainsworth (who is also the founder of Tectelos training and consulting firm, which focuses on literacy in and access to technology) and by senior grant consultant the Rev. Dr. Denise Thorpe, interim director of the Seminary's Doctor of Ministry Program.

"This grant will address a pervasive problem in the United States, namely, that Black and Latinx populations fare noticeably worse than White and other ethnic groups on important health and educational indices," noted the Rev. Dr. David Esterline, president of PTS at the time of the grant announcement. The one-year project, beginning May 2020, furthers the Seminary's commitment to local ministry in the way of Jesus.

"We are grateful to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for its willingness to partner with the Henry Luce Foundation's Theology Program in a networked initiative that involves rapid response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic in a number of U.S. cities and regions," said Luce Foundation Program Director Jonathan VanAntwerpen. "Responsive to the ideas and creativity of our grantee partners, and attentive to local needs and capabilities, these efforts are taking multiple forms. But each will involve both direct support for community-based organizations and aligned efforts to give voice to the experiences of under-represented communities during the pandemic."

The Henry Luce Foundation seeks to enrich public discourse by promoting innovative scholarship, cultivating new leaders, and fostering international understanding. The Foundation advances its mission through grantmaking and leadership programs in the fields of Asia, higher education, religion and theology, art, and public policy. Established in 1936 by Henry R. Luce, the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Time, Inc., the Foundation's earliest work honored his parents, missionary educators in China. The Foundation's programs today reflect the value Mr. Luce placed on learning, leadership, and long-term commitment in philanthropy.

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary  
616 North Highland Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206  
Phone: 412-362-5610



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