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PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY RECEIVES LUCE GRANT TO EXPLORE GENTRIFICATION, RACE, AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is pleased to receive a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation to support a multidimensional project on gentrification, race, and theological education. The project works at intersections between theological education, church life, and violent transformations of urban space—particularly where gentrification results in dislocations and erasures of communities.

“These grant funds allow researchers from three institutions of higher learning, one church, and a nonprofit to explore the racial dimensions of theology’s participation in the dynamics of gentrification,” said the Rev. Dr. David Esterline, former president and professor emeritus of cross-cultural theological education at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, at the time of the grant’s announcement. “This is a wonderful opportunity for a collaborative team of scholars and practitioners with deep experience to engage a pressing public issue that connects to Pittsburgh Seminary’s ongoing commitment to being a good neighbor and addressing issues of racism.”

In addition to co-principal investigators the Rev. Drs. **Denise Thorpe** and **R. Drew Smith** from Pittsburgh Seminary, team members include: Dr. **Scott Hagley**, also from Pittsburgh Seminary; Dr. J. Kameron Carter, Indiana University; Dr. Donyelle McCray, Yale Divinity School; the Rev. Jemonde Taylor, St. Ambrose Episcopal Church, Raleigh, N.C.; and the Rev. Mark Ramsey, Macedonian Ministries. The work builds on Collaborative Inquiry Team support by The Louisville Institute which is funded by The Lilly Endowment.

The project will provide several vantage points on gentrification, including the production of a documentary film and visual and auditory material for a transmedia platform that utilizes participatory media allowing users to develop shared stories through their interaction with and additions to the stories being presented. Another innovative element will be a mixed-methods research project that transgresses “inside and outside” boundaries erected around theological education by joining students, scholars, and communities in a shared learning and knowledge-production process that looks to generate richer narratives within seminary and church life about relationships between theological praxis and urban landscapes, locations, and communal aspirations. Settings for this work include a church in Asheville, N.C., and several gentrifying neighborhoods in Pittsburgh.

“These grant funds will allow us to bring context to the often cloistered seminary space to augment learning and to explore the process of decoding race relations in our current society,” said Smith.

Rooted in the Reformed tradition and in relationship with Christ-followers from other traditions, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary forms and equips people for ministries familiar and yet to unfold and communities present and yet to be gathered.

The Henry Luce Foundation seeks to enrich public discourse by promoting innovative scholarship, cultivating new leaders, and fostering international understanding. For 80 years, it has advanced its mission through grantmaking and leadership programs in the fields of Asia, higher education, religion and theology, art, and public policy. For more information, visit www.hluce.org.



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