

Members of the RBS Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography & Allies Condemn and Stand Against White Supremacy, the Klan, and Neo-Nazi Terror at UVA & in Charlottesville

August 12, 2017

To the vibrant and diverse community of scholars, archivists, librarians, and curators affiliated with the study of material texts and objects and to our students around the world:

Members of the Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography, founded at Rare Book School at the University of Virginia in 2017, watched in horror, along with the majority of Americans, as white supremacists, Klu Klux Klan members, and Neo-Nazis terrorized the University of Virginia and greater Charlottesville community on July 8, 2017 and then again on August 11–12, 2017.

Between 2012 and 2017, the sixty founding members of this Society congregated every summer at the University of Virginia as a pluralistic and inclusive community committed to collectively pushing the boundaries of book history and bibliography. As scholars of books, we are committed to freedom of speech and see the diversity of our backgrounds and perspectives as critical to our common cause. The fellows of our Society were disturbed to our cores as racial, anti-Semitic, and homophobic terror seized the university dorms, grounds, monuments, downtown streets, and beloved landmarks in the form of a torchlight procession—reminiscent of both KKK rallies in Jim Crow America and pro-Nazi parades of the Third Reich—that culminated in a terrorist attack leaving dozens injured and a member of our local community dead. We cherish our time together at Rare Book School (a place we have had the privilege to call an intellectual home) and are horrified to witness the unbridled violence, hate, and fear-mongering that targeted the intellectual ideals of UVA, one of our nation's prized public universities. We are proud of the brave students at the University of Virginia, who asserted their right to protest on the Lawn and Rotunda and stood peacefully united in unequivocal condemnation of this heinous attack. We fully support and thank them.

The Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography at Rare Book School remains committed to the tireless struggle for the expansion of educational rights and the obtainable American patriotic goal of creating a more perfect union. We embrace all members of our extended community regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic background, political or institutional affiliation, and we are fully dedicated to diversifying our voices as we build this Society together.

In our time at Rare Book School we have benefited from the willingness of colleagues and instructors from diverse backgrounds to come to Charlottesville to participate in the collective intellectual humanist project that Rare Book School represents. We state unequivocally that all are welcome in the Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography, and that the presence of scholars from all backgrounds and places of origin is the singular strength of the program, to which we are forcefully committed. As humanist scholars of history and culture we recognize organized hatred and violence—both threatened and real—for the destructive forces that they are, and condemn them completely. We stand united with our colleagues at Rare Book School and UVA, and the members of the Charlottesville community, in defying and resisting attempts to divide, injure, and oppress.

We conclude with words of encouragement to our students spoken by UVA alumnus Senator Robert F. Kennedy in apartheid Cape Town, South Africa during the summer of 1966: “It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

In peaceful solidarity.

Signed

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