



With Negativity On The Uptick, College Program Pursues A More Excellent Way **Baptist Press**

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ANDERSON, S.C. (BP) – America’s current state of dissension brings similarities to 60 years ago, when protests were common and voices were loud. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the leading voice. It’s one Matthew Daniels wants to elevate again.

Daniels isn’t the only one, of course. This weekend, Americans will recognize the pastor and civil rights icon who not only championed nonviolent resistance but also recognizing others’ worth. A curriculum taught at Anderson University, where Daniels is a distinguished professor at the South Carolina Baptist-affiliated school, looks to enroll young people to live and teach King’s dream.

Daniels points out that negative societal patterns are born out of and thrive in three Ds – demonizing, dehumanizing, and destroying. The word he attaches to the conversation – dignity – keeps the alliteration while changing the direction.

“Throughout history, oppression and violence have advanced through [these] destructive patterns,” he said. “From fascism and communism to ISIS, Boko Haram, white supremacy, and genocides like Rwanda, the pattern tragically repeats itself. In America, this same logic has fueled division, hate crimes, and domestic terrorism. Today’s headlines indicate that the pace of violence is only accelerating.

“Against the 3Ds, there is one enduring cure: teaching the dignity of every human person. When dignity takes root in hearts and minds, it reduces the power of extremist ideologies to weaponize people for violence.”

The result is the Ambassador Young Fellows (AYF) program. It came about after an early 2019 meeting between Daniels and Andrew Young, the confidant of King who served as executive director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, later becoming Atlanta’s mayor and a United Nations ambassador. Their discussion lasted five hours and Young became a collaborator of the program to bear his name. Last May, he was the keynote speaker for Anderson’s spring commencement.

King’s model of nonviolent resistance is foundational to the program, transforming “conflict into change, hate into reconciliation, and division into unity,” said Daniels. “His dream, rooted in the founding vision of America, calls us to honor the ‘promissory note’ of our Declaration – that every person is endowed with equal and inherent dignity.”

The AYF launched last summer with approximately 50 students. Most were from Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HCBUs) but included students from universities like Anderson and Wheaton. Daniels told BP the AYF curriculum will be featured at the upcoming national gatherings for the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) and National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).

Daniels, a distinguished professor of Law, Political Science and Human Rights, is also the founder of Good of All, a global education initiative focusing on universal human rights and online counter-terrorism. His Anderson bio notes that a British government-funded study at the University of Nottingham affirmed Daniels’ teachings.

The curriculum taught at Anderson, Daniels said, is built around “interactive teaching, discussion groups, work groups and a final presentation.” Observers, he shared with BP, called the experience last summer “anointed.”

Daniels’ goal is to have an “anchor” school with the curriculum in each state.

“There is a path forward that offers hope for rescuing American politics from its increasing descent into discord and even violence,” he said. “Moreover, it is based on what Americans once knew so well – the importance of respecting life and liberty based on universal or inalienable rights.”