I am a professor at the University of Texas at Austin, one of America's major research institutions. My field of study is rhetoric, a discipline dating back to Ancient Greece that studies persuasion. In particular I am interested in the impact of one's language on audiences, regardless of the intent of the discourse.

Let me be upfront: I did not vote for Donald Trump and do not support many of things he said during the campaign. Nevertheless, I accept the legitimacy of his election and hold in high respect the office of the presidency he soon will occupy.

Please know that I and many others in academe are trying to be open-by minded and avoid prejudging what Trump may do following inauguration. However, over the course of the campaign we have witnessed a spike in acts of hatred and bigotry (including those aimed at university faculty) that at least in part are attributed to his rhetoric. Moreover, the country is now watching in shock and horror the video of a speech given by Richard Spencer, leader of a white supremacist and anti-Semitic group, who is celebrating Trump's victory and using the legitimacy of his election to advance and validate the shameful cause of his group.

Trump's deafening silence in response is profound and saddens me deeply. Simply responding to a question from the press will not suffice. As the Anti-Defamation League reminds us, our leaders must respond to racism and hatred loudly and persistently.

As the president-elect wisely said moments after declaring victory, he plans to be the president of all Americans. Wonderful! So he should do just that by giving a major address decisively condemning all acts of hatred and racism, regardless of whether he is the cause of these acts. After all, groups like those that Spencer leads explicitly invoke Trump's name, rallying behind his election to affirm their despicable beliefs.

It is incumbent upon the president-elect immediately to speak directly to the American public, once and for all denouncing this venomous un-American
discourse and making clear that hate will not be tolerated during the Trump presidency.

Many have accused Trump and his appointees of being racist and anti-Semitic. I am not leveling that charge. Frankly, I worry that we spend far too much time arguing about whether the labels racist and anti-Semitic accurately describe Trump and those around him. These debates often degenerate into unproductive and inflammatory name calling, obscuring the more important and troubling issue, namely, how one's rhetoric encourages, legitimizes and normalizes hateful behaviors and tendencies.

The key is accountability: I teach my students that regardless of intent everyone should be responsible and accountable for the effects produced by their discourse. History teaches us that the effects of one’s words are more dangerous than what may be in the heart. Therefore, it's time for Trump and others to acknowledge this reality by forcefully declaring racist behavior deplorable and unacceptable.

If President-elect Trump has time to critique what the cast of Hamilton said to Vice President-elect Pence, complain about Saturday Night Live's parody of him, rail against the media's coverage of his campaign, and challenge the recount of the popular vote, then surely he has time to do the right thing by condemning all horrific acts of hatred that accelerated in the wake of his campaign rhetoric.

We are counting on Trump to reaffirm American values and core democratic principles. This is a teachable moment. It is his chance to be the president of all Americans, uniting the country behind ideas everyone shares, whether we are Democrats or Republicans. My students, the nation and entire world are watching.

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http://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2016/12/05/trump-must-denounce-racist-acts-committed-name