New York University relies more on virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic than ever before in its history. As an evolving Global Network University (GNU), in the vision of President Emeritus John Sexton, NYU has a vocation is to be open to the diverse voices, to the many experiences of human beings in our world. What are their basic human needs, in which respects are they most vulnerable, how can their aspirations be fulfilled? As we reflect on the fragile nature of interconnectedness in our present world and the centrality of human security for the population inhabiting our planet, we may realize that one way institutions of higher education can eradicate violent extremism during the uncertain time in which we live is to listen to partners we identify as critical to our learning, research, and service endeavors.

In his spiritual volume, *The Listening Life*, Adam S. McHugh explains that the words listen and obey have the same root. In Latin, the word “obey” would not exist without the word “listen.” The word we translate into English as “obedience” literally means “a listening from below.” Obedience is a deep listening, a listening of the whole person, a hearing with your ears and with your heart....” In his volume, *Standing for Reason: The University in a Dogmatic Age*, John Sexton places faith and hope in “economically, socially, and racially diverse university campuses, in healthy classroom debates, and in the academic freedom afforded to higher education.”

The virtual learning experience in a “classroom without borders” can never substitute for in-person, on campus learning. The online experience does not aim to replace face-to-face interactions. It is meant to introduce a different encounter, one that welcomes distinct local knowledge to inform a transnational-experiential-online community in the making in each virtual seminar that is taught. In this webinar, my aim is to discuss the various partner organizations identified in my seminars at New York University, including the Women’s Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE), the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) educational initiative organized by EdVenture Partners, led by CEO Tony Sgro, for the United States Departments of State and Homeland Security, and the Syrian Emergency Task Force (SETF), which engages to eradicate violent extremism in the midst of the most urgent humanitarian crisis we face in our world. Thank you.

New York University engages with partner organizations, for example, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in program initiatives designed to counter extremism. This consistent effort has the advantage that courses taught on-site in New York or on-site and online (also known as blended seminars) or virtually with students enrolling from across the United States and around the world, may consistently be informed by the course literature as well as by their involvement with civil society projects. In the virtual seminars, diverse student voices from many countries come together in Zoom conference to create over time one learning, research, and service community. Their distinct local experiences infuse what are trans-local experiential-online courses. In recent years, my NYU seminars have partnered with Ms. Daisy Khan, Executive Director, Women’s Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE) to understand the ways in which the *WISE Up Report* is used to counter extremism. NYU students have WISE internships to support advocacy as well as research initiatives. One notable example at present is the creation of a reintegration program for a young woman who was in prison after having been convicted for spreading propaganda in New York during 2019. She was sentenced to 1.5 years in prison and subsequently released this past summer. Her case is the basis for creating a reintegration program for “ISIS fighters” in the United States.
The reintegration program will help other “ISIS fighters” around the United States to reintegrate successfully into society without being a threat to themselves or others.

In past years, NYU classes have participated in the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) initiative presenting their P2P campaigns at the United States Department of State along with other American colleges and universities as well as other institutions around the world. P2P faculty from different countries around the world are welcomed by me at NYU New York. One colleague, Dr. Christian Rossi, from the University of Cagliari in Sardinia, continues to research with me and a cohort of colleagues, including architect Dr. Anna Grichting, to consider practical ways to create places that leave no room for recruitment of vulnerable populations by violent extremist groups.

The newest partner in my NYU seminars, which speaks to educate to eradicate, is the Syrian Emergency Task Force (SETF), which is designed to match NYU students with different academic concentrations, including human rights and international law, transnational security, and international development and humanitarian assistance, with SETF projects. The Syrian Emergency Task Force has trained and equipped local civilian councils in Syria to allow them to be able to govern the least liberated government areas so that extremists and warlords do not fill in the vacuum. The SETF also supports civil society-independent media activists and humanitarian and educational leaders who aim to push back against extremist ideology. For example, the work with Tomorrow’s Dawn Women’s Center in Idlib, Syria to connect specialists using videoconference technology, for example, a Zoom call with the women in Syria and a physician in the United States, Dr. Zaher, who provides education about the coronavirus focusing on how to remain safe in these challenging times. Women are key in Syrian society. They educate children, which is the most important type of work in terms of eradicating extremism, particularly for the most vulnerable in society. The SETF also cooperates with The Wisdom House Kindergarten, now displaced in the Aleppo countryside near the Turkish/Syria border supporting the Syrians through providing a school for children. In addition, the SETF is educating children (without indoctrination) in English and Arabic as well as geography, science, math while providing mental health support and sustenance. This work is also being accomplished for teachers and their families - all in coordination with the local council. This process, which, at its heart, is educating orphans, can also counter extremism.

As the experiential-online design of my NYU seminars evolves, the Letters of Hope for Syria initiative may be referenced in our discussions given that one of the biggest factors of extremism is the hopelessness and feelings of abandonment, which are conducive to radicalization. The Letters of Hope for Syria—digital or physical—are educational in the sense of learning about someone else through which emotional support may be provided. Those in Syria recall that there are people around the world who acknowledge their suffering and whose aim is to help alleviate their pain in the context of the evolution of transnational civil society. These messages of hope in the Letters counter the message ISIS spreads, which asserts that everyone else in the world is evil. The legal work of the Syrian Emergency Task Force may also be referenced in that the efforts to establish legislation or undertake prosecutions to address war crimes have been important instruments counteracting extremism, which thrives when there is no accountability. Likewise the SETF engagement to educate policy makers in the United States regarding the injustices that are unfolding in Syria is integral to efforts that may “provent,” in Burton’s terminology, violent extremism.