

A Response to the National Post-Election Climate

The KU Black Faculty and Staff Council; Latino Faculty and Staff Council; and the Sexuality and Gender Diversity Faculty and Staff Council recognize ways that the 2016 presidential election has altered discourse in this nation. Since the election, the Southern Poverty Law Center has recorded over 850 incidents of hate and harassment.ⁱ Of those, “K-12 settings and colleges — have been the most common venues for hate incidents.”ⁱⁱ The University of Kansas campus itself has been the site of recent incidents of harassment and intimidation of populations marginalized on the basis of such identities as race, nationality, religion, gender, and sexuality.ⁱⁱⁱ

Throughout this election season, and in the weeks since, LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual) people, Muslims and Arab-Americans, Mexicans, Jewish people, Black people, Indigenous people, Latinx^{iv}, immigrant communities, the undocumented, and people with disabilities have been exposed openly to bias, bigotry, and vitriol. Those who face multiple forms of marginalization are in most danger because they exist at the intersections of various targeted identities. The toxic electoral climate has normalized views promoting racism, ableism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, anti-trans harassment and violence, misogyny, rape culture, and anti-Semitism. This has provided justification for hateful and dangerous acts. Additionally, anti-scientific thought and anti-intellectualism have further endangered the aforementioned marginalized populations.

Policies proposed by the incoming presidential administration^v include canceling funding to Sanctuary cities, forcibly deporting more than 2 million people, suspending immigration based on race and religion, and imposing an “ideological test” on refugees fleeing war. Additionally, the Kansas legislature passed a concealed firearms law several years ago that soon will be implemented on our campus. This will contribute to a climate of fear and danger for marginalized students, staff and faculty, and aggravate a situation in which campus sexual assault also remains a clear and present danger.

It is within this social and political context that our Faculty Staff Councils call for a renewed commitment to the safety and well being of students and colleagues who are vulnerable and whose protection is in question. We follow in the tradition of global and domestic activism, and call on the University community to strongly reject hate speech, and the intimidation and assault that can result from them. The passive acceptance of these forms of violence promotes a climate of fear and exclusion among marginalized people.

Over the past year, KU has affirmed a commitment to inclusion “to eliminate campus disparities, discrimination and harassment”^{vi} through the Vision Statement of the Office of Diversity and Equity. We urge the University to renew, fortify, and boldly declare this commitment.

This can only be accomplished by acknowledging that the role of a university is to create an environment that rejects fear mongering and exposes arguments without factual basis as myths. Moreover, the University must refuse the notion that open debate requires the acceptance of all ideas as equal. This leads to false equivalencies that presuppose that all ideas, no matter how hateful or untrue, have merit. Instead, we must renounce ideas that deny the humanity of any group of people. Inclusivity does not require legitimizing hate speech and acts.

Further, we call on University leadership to protect its marginalized students, staff, and faculty who have come under attack for their work to develop and support a Sanctuary Campus. We request that University leaders affirm their support and commitment for persons or groups that research, teach, and perform service in and with targeted communities. This critical inquiry and service provide a necessary foundation for challenging false narratives about minoritized communities and constructing opportunities for understanding and growth. Like those working for justice around the country, we believe that “to do otherwise is to remain silent and to side with the oppressors, of which we outright reject.”^{vii}

Our Faculty and Staff Councils send this message to marginalized KU students, staff, and faculty:

We are with you against hateful speech, acts of violence, and other forms of intimidation. We join you in advocating for a fair and safe KU.

You are welcome here.

We see you.

We invite you to contact us.

Sincerely,

Black Faculty and Staff Council
 Latino Faculty and Staff Council
 Sexuality and Gender Diversity Faculty and Staff Council
 The University of Kansas

ⁱ <https://www.splcenter.org/20161129/ten-days-after-harassment-and-intimidation-aftermath-election>

ⁱⁱ https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com_hate_incidents_report_final.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/u-of-kansas-cheerleader-suspended-from-squad-over-kkk-snapchat/115675>

^{iv} This term is used as a gender-neutral alternative to “Latino,” “Latina,” and even Latin@. It disrupts the traditional gender binary and acknowledges the vast spectrum of gender and sexual identities.

^v <https://assets.donaldjtrump.com/landings/contract/O-TRU-102316-Contractv02.pdf>

^{vi} <http://diversity.ku.edu/vision-and-mission>

^{vii} <http://static.ehe.osu.edu/downloads/diversity/EHE-DICE-Position-Statement.pdf>