



November 18, 2015

Dear KU Community,

Student activism and the struggle against structural violence and injustice prompted the creation of the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department in 1972. Then, a student group calling themselves the “February Sisters” demanded a response to the sexism and gender disparities at the University of Kansas. Today, Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk and the Black Student Union are calling for meaningful and impactful responses to anti-Black racism and white supremacy within the university’s structure, policies, and culture. In keeping with our legacy and continued mission, the faculty of the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department echo the clear and reasonable call to have both ongoing dialogue and sustained action as key components of creating a campus that is safe and enriching for all students. The recent statements from across campus – from students, departments, programs and the KU administration – demonstrate that we are stronger working together to address injustice.

The last year, and particularly the last month, we have seen increased public discussion of social injustice, racism, and structural violence. The roots of these problems are longstanding and operate in conjunction with various forces including sexism, heteronormativity, able-ism, nativism, economic imperialism, and white supremacy. We see the work of the Black Student Union and Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk as a continuation of the steadfast and multi-faceted battle against structural violence and injustice. The Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department arose from the dual goals of examining gender, race, sexual orientation, and class inequalities and translating this research into tangible and useable knowledge that contributes to the betterment of communities. We trace the roots of these problems through time and analyze their manifestation in our current cultural moment. Thus, we celebrate those who have struggled to improve society for all, including the many members of the KU community who voiced concerns and stories of structural inequality and discrimination at the town hall meeting.

The faculty of the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department offers our support to all members of the KU community working to make the university a fully democratic, safe, and violence-free campus for all students, staff, and faculty. We also make a commitment to fight racist and sexist aggression, violence, intimidation, and harassment in our classrooms, on our campus, and in our community. We dedicate our classrooms and research to the challenging yet transformative conversations and thoughtful engagement necessary to facilitate critical thinking and change. Most importantly, the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department at the University of Kansas supports the students, faculty, staff, and members of the administration who are engaging these vital issues, giving voice to injustice, and working for change. We, too, offer our support and labor to the larger KU community as it works actively to create a better campus for all students, faculty, and staff.

We are at a pivotal moment of enormous potential. The need for change is absolute. The costs of

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

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injustice to our students, our faculty, our staff, and our community are far too great to excuse inaction. The opportunity brought about by last Wednesday's discussion, the countless conversations that preceded it, and the many more to come should energize us. Productively working through these complex and difficult challenges together, with open and critical minds, is what defines higher education. Doing it well is what has come to define KU. The Department of WGSS hopes that, as it has in the past, the KU community draws upon the full resources of its students, faculty, staff, and community to make important strides toward social justice.

With Sincerity and In Solidarity,

The Faculty of Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies, University of Kansas