

From: [Kimberly A. Barrett](#)
Subject: Democracy and Antiracism
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Dear Lawrence University Students, Staff and Faculty,

I am writing today with a message of hope in these deeply troubling times. Last week we witnessed the culmination of months of deception by members of government, including the 45th president of the United States, regarding the outcome of an election. This deception spawned mob action that resulted in loss of life in the course of breaching and vandalizing the capital building of the United States of America. Many characterized it as an insurrection aimed at preventing the certification of the duly elected 46th president and vice president of the U.S. It failed.

Not only did the rule of law prevail and insurrection prove unsuccessful, but on the same day we learned of the election of the first African-American and Jewish senators in the history of the state of Georgia. In a recent article in *The Nation*, historian Eric Foner characterized this event as follows, "The election results are the culmination of a mass, interracial movement to transform a state that long denied its Black population the right to vote into a genuine democracy." It seems to me that a functioning multicultural, representative democracy will eventually provide us with the tools to end racism by forming governments that reflect and understand the diverse constituencies they are elected to serve.

We are not there yet. On January 6, 2021 we saw on display, as some paraded with confederate flags in our Capital, both the triumph of democracy and the consequences of the legacy of white supremacy which corrupted our nations beginning. But as we continue our progress towards the formation of a more perfect union, I am heartened by the evidence that supports the idea (one many have said before) that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice. I am particularly excited about our continued antiracism work which is key to achieving the democracy to which we aspire and fulfilling our university mission.

However, we cannot form a more perfect union or accomplish the aims of a Lawrence education without vigilance, intention, and struggle. Most importantly, we must find the courage to tell the truth and to accept truths that we find distasteful. So I offer this message of hope to motivate you to stay the course and even increase the efforts in which you are engaged to make Lawrence and the communities of which you are part antiracist. To that end, I would like to bring to your attention a few upcoming events offered by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and introduce a team of student peer educators who will be available to conduct antiracism sessions upon request.

First, I would like to make you aware of an opportunity to participate in a national virtual event, the **WK Kellogg Family Foundation's 4th Annual National Day of Racial Healing** on

January 19th. The day will be centered around experiences rooted in truth-telling that lead to racial healing for a more just and equitable future. It's a day for authentic dialogues, so we continue to learn to see and hear each other, and it's a day to share our stories and recognize our shared humanity, so we can come together and transform the world around us. This year's program features John Legend, Hasan Minhaj, Ta'Nehisi Coates, Yara Shahidi, Storm Reid, Aloe Blacc, and more. You can read more about it and RSVP [here](#).

During the winter and spring term the Office of Diversity and Inclusion's **Cultural Competency Lecture Series** will focus on information that helps us better understand the issues that divide us as well as strategies for bridging those divides. They will feature information that is part of traveling exhibitions from the History Museum at the Castle. Exhibits will be available for socially distanced viewing in the Warch Center and online. The first lecture on January 19, from 4-5:30pm will be an interactive discussion entitled "Bridging the Gap." It will explore issues related to income inequality and will be led by Dustin Mack, Ph.D., Chief Curator at the Museum. Other topics will include Race in the Fox Cities and Gender Equity. To register and get the link to the program, contact Cindy Pickart (cindy.j.pickart@lawrence.edu).

We will also continue to provide **Upstander Training** facilitated by Common Talks. This training prepares participants to intervene safely and effectively when they witness discrimination, harassment or other harm related to bias. The first session of the new year will take place, Friday January 15, from 1-5pm via Zoom. To register and get the link, contact Cindy Pickart (cindy.j.pickart@lawrence.edu).

Finally, I would like to introduce a new group of interns working in our office serving as **peer diversity educators** who will be available to talk with student organizations, groups, and classes regarding antiracism and allyship. We are very fortunate to have Janai Robbins (Senior, Ethnic Studies), Willie Sturgis (Junior, Economics) and (Cat Chu, First Year, Neuroscience) filling these important leadership roles. To arrange a workshop or presentation please contact Cindy Pickart (cindy.j.pickart@lawrence.edu).

I hope you will take part in one or more of the aforementioned programs or the many other diversity initiatives across campus in order to enhance racial equity, social justice and learning at Lawrence. Don't forget to check out the programs offered by the Center for Community Engagement and the Diversity and Intercultural Center in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday on January 18.

Best wishes for successful term!

Kimberly

Kimberly Barrett, Ph.D.

Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion
and Associate Dean of the Faculty
Lawrence University

Sampson House
711 E. Boldt Way
Appleton, WI 54911

[\(920\) 832-7451](tel:(920)832-7451)

kimberly.a.barrett@lawrence.edu

<https://www.lawrence.edu/info/offices/diversity-and-inclusion>