



January 2, 2025

Mary Dean
President
Kansas Justice Advocate, Inc.
Mary0506@cox.net

Dear Mary,

It was nice seeing you after Christmas alongside leaders of the Wichita African American Council of Elders. While reflecting on the past year, I'm reminded of the first principle of Kwanzaa: *Umoja* (Unity).

As our state's first Asian American mayor and the first woman elected to serve a full term as Wichita Mayor, I deeply understand the importance of fair and impartial representation. Our community voices and perspectives on cultural diversity matter and help foster community dialogue on how to live together in unity.

At your request, I have given the idea of reparations considerable thought and prayer. While I admire your commitment to a path seeking equity and justice, I respectfully disagree on the implementation of a local reparations ordinance. This issue is extremely complex and potentially divisive. I believe it also presents the risk of undermining the achievements and resilience of our Black American community. With deep historical roots and far-reaching implications, something like this is best addressed at the federal level, where solutions can be deliberated most comprehensively.

I also recognize the importance of honoring Kansas' rich history of independence, which includes entering the Union in 1861 as a free state, where slavery was prohibited. Kansas played a pivotal role in the Underground Railroad and the fight for freedom and justice before the turmoil of "Bleeding Kansas." In this spirit, the City of Wichita will continue to acknowledge Black History Month and celebrate the profound contributions of Black Americans to our city, state and nation's history.

As mayor, my primary objective is to focus the city on our community's top priorities. Those are crime, streets, economic development and homelessness, in that order. This has been quite a challenge, especially while our city remains hamstrung by a significant \$22 million budget deficit.

I acknowledge work remains to ensure every citizen has access to equal opportunities and is treated with fundamental fairness. I want to assure you the City of Wichita remains committed to advancing equity for all citizens and has made substantial progress:

- Implementing initiatives to expand access to affordable housing.
- Enacting municipal court reforms to ensure equal treatment.
- Developing workforce programs to create economic opportunities.
- Supporting women-owned and minority-owned business development.
- Passing a Non-Discrimination Ordinance.
- Joining the AARP Network of Age Friendly Communities.

I encourage all Wichitans to engage with the seven-member City Council. As always, you may reach all Council Members via email at DLCouncilMembers@wichita.gov or by attending the weekly Tuesday Council Meeting at City Hall or monthly District Advisory Board Meeting at six various locations. You can find more information about the City Council at www.wichita.gov/CityCouncil.

In 2025, it is my sincere hope our city will find a greater sense of unity and move forward together.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lily Wu', written in a cursive style.

Lily Wu
Mayor
City of Wichita