

Statement of Support from the Department of History
November 16, 2015

The Department of History is writing to express our support for Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk and the University of Kansas Black Student Union's efforts to combat racism in all forms and to systematically improve resources for students of color on campus. Without opining on any specific demand, we are writing to express our support for the thorough and expeditious exploration of all of the students' demands. We ask the university administration to listen to these requests and to translate them into meaningful, just, and concrete actions that will sustain the common good of our university community.

Students' calls for diversity training; increasing the presence of underrepresented minorities among students, faculty, and staff; enhancing mental health services for students of color; banning concealed weapons from campus; responding vigorously to allegations of sexual harassment; investigating hate crimes; and giving students of color more representation in student government would all result in positive changes and improve the university's bold aspirations to be a truly excellent center of higher education.

As scholars and educators we are dedicated to repudiating racism in all forms, and we are outraged at incidents of sexual and racial harassment on and off campus. Jayhawkers once fought to prevent slavery from existing in Kansas, and it is time for all Jayhawks to fight to expel racism from our campus and our state. The University of Kansas cannot fulfill its mission to serve the state and the wider region if the student body and the faculty are not as racially diverse as the state and the region, nor can the university fulfill its mission of developing human potential and educating tomorrow's leaders if students face hostility and feel unwelcome on campus.

The Department of History shares in the university's responsibility to educate students on the history of race, racism, and the roots of the patterns of privilege and forms of discrimination that still shape 21st century America. Through education about our past and dialogue about the present, we as members of the university community should be striving to eradicate both structural racism and the overtly racist behaviors of individuals in our community. Our work--in classes, in research, and in the community--will continue to examine issues of race, class, gender, and identity so that we can know more about the pervasive legacies of racism and oppression. As a department, we are committed to fostering an inclusive environment that is welcoming to all. We call on the administration to take swift and concrete steps that will make this a reality for everyone at KU.