

## An Open Letter to Anthropology Students from the Faculty of the Department of Anthropology

January 9, 2017

Dear Students:

The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States is likely to be one of the defining moments of your lives, along with the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and whatever epochal events lie ahead for all of us. As the fall semester of 2016 comes to a close and this new era draws closer, as your professors and as anthropologists, we would like to share with you our response to this event.

During the campaign, Trump and some of his supporters expressed views that many see as racist, anti-immigrant, Islamophobic, and misogynistic. Trump openly mocked a disabled reporter during a campaign event. The entities endorsing Trump included *The Crusader*, official newspaper for the white supremacist organization, the Ku Klux Klan. In this context, it should not be surprising that the Southern Poverty Law Center documented 867 hate-related incidents in just the first ten days following the election. We know that political party affiliations and voting records do not define people or their complex views on society and politics. We also know that many of you are concerned about what these trends mean for our country moving forward. We invite *everyone* to have conversations with us.

Anthropology is distinctively placed to strengthen our understanding of, and respect for, human diversity in all its forms. Our disciplinary philosophy of cultural relativism and our fieldwork methods emphasizing long-term collaborative relationships across cultural lines and the value of emic perspectives offer us (including you as students) a relevant and needed skill set. We consider it our mandate to reject, and we will aggressively challenge, the current climate of hostility toward difference. In our classes and other academic programs, we will not tolerate expressions of disrespect or hate toward people based on their race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, migration status, or disability. As faculty, we do cherish and will uphold free intellectual inquiry and the freedom of expression. But just as the right to free speech does not entitle one to yell "Fire!" in a crowded theatre, neither do we believe that it legitimizes speech and symbolic action whose only purpose is to cause pain and fear. We pledge to stand with and defend any member of our community who is targeted for hateful action because of some aspect of their identity. If you yourself feel threatened or attacked, or if you know of others on campus who are, please feel free to come to us for support. We also urge you to stand in solidarity with targeted members of our community and our society more generally and to take responsibility for shaping your country's future.

Many of our classes specifically address issues related to race and racism, migration, social inequality, the construction and politics of gender and sexuality, and other topics crucial to our national conversation in the context of the impending Trump administration. We look forward to creating, together with you, spaces for rigorous, respectful, ethically-informed intellectual discourse and work that will help to move our society forward.

Sincerely,

Margaret Bender

Sherri Lawson Clark

Steven J. Folmar

Karin Friederic

Mary Good

Andrew Gurstelle

Eric Jones

Ellen Miller

Paul Thacker