



*WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUÉ*

**November 16, 2016**

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.*

—Leonard Cohen

**Lux Hominum Vita:** “Light the life of man,” is UNM’s motto. This week’s message is a very personal one, and I hope that through the cracks, the light will get in. Our country just went through a divisive election season, and the nation and the world were surprised with the outcome, given the pundits and the polls’ predictions. I personally find answers to many of my questions in books, so I went back and re-read “In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong,” by Amin Maalouf. He remarks, “Elections do no more than reflect the image a society has of itself and of its component parts. They may help it arrive at a diagnosis, but they alone can never produce a cure.” Whether you are celebrating or mourning the election, my communiqué this week is about how we see each other, and how we react to political events. But mostly it is about how we, as a UNM community, can comfort those who are scared, hurt, or disenfranchised.

My reflections are deeply personal and shaped by my experience as an immigrant and from my many identities and roles. More than 35 years ago, I left a country whose citizens had fractured around religious, political, educational, and socioeconomic faults. They stopped talking to each other, and soon, discussions that used to take place in cafes, churches and mosques, were replaced by gun fights and bombings. I came to the U.S. to study and was immediately welcomed in small town America, where I learned how Americans could disagree on so many levels and yet be united in their support of such shared values as democratic process, kindness toward others, equality before the law and duty to serve. I saw how different races, religions, and nationalities mingled in the mills of the Midwest, and I marveled at the First Amendment that allowed anyone to speak freely. I became a citizen in 1992, and was able to vote for the first time in my life! In the years since, I have participated in our democracy in many ways, and done what I could, as a citizen, a scholar, a teacher and a university leader to foster dedication to participation, and the free and inclusive exchange of ideas. I describe my journey as a way to frame how I approach what has been taking place on college campuses, including our own, before this election and since.

Last week, we received reports of incidents against some of our students, both in the classroom and outside it. Some were disrespected because of their religion, while others were harassed because of their ethnicity. We also saw hateful graffiti painted in many places across campus, and we are hearing from many of you who are worried about the future. These attacks on any of us are attacks on all of us. They fly in the face of every American value that I was taught when I immigrated. We cannot become numb to the warning signs of closed-mindedness, and of mindless hatred.

At the risk of restating the obvious, our discourse and differences must remain civil and respectful. Across the nation’s campuses, incidents such as those that took place on our own campus, have led university leaders to call for compassion, communication, and most urgently, for protection of those who have been targeted, including immigrants. As the president of Southwestern University said:

“I believe that we as an academic institution must have higher community standards as we balance freedom of speech and respect for the well-being of others — a balance that is neither easy nor pain-free if we feel powerless, silenced, scared, or angry. We must acknowledge the need to process our emotions and only then can begin to move from an emotional reaction to thoughtful (and ideally positive) forward movement by working through what we

have experienced and learned... The genuine need for us to process our emotions, however, is never an excuse to hurt one another, to vandalize, to break laws or University policy — independent of political ideology.”

Regardless of how you felt Wednesday morning, and how you are processing the results going forward, I leave you with two thoughts. The first comes from an international newspaper, published the day before our election, where the writer envied the fact that Americans were going to vote, and that no one really knew who the winner would be, as opposed to the many places where election results are foregone conclusions. The second is that on Tuesday, Nov. 8, while Americans were going to the polls, many people died around the world for no other reason than that they belonged to different “tribes,” some without ever having cast one vote in their entire lives. As we study the political and societal forces that led to the moment we are in, and assess the multiple consequences of this election for our daily lives and the life of the nation, I urge you to call on your best human, American, New Mexican, and Lobo instincts and values. No one should be made to feel unwelcome or unsafe because of who they are, what they think, or how they vote. We say we protect the pack, and that goes for everyone, including those who disagree with us, and those of us who came here from elsewhere attracted by American values and better lives.

We do have resources for those of you feeling threatened, despondent, angry and alone. Student Health and Counseling, CARS, and the LoboRespect Advocacy Center stand ready to serve you. The Division of Equity and Inclusion is working to ensure that this campus is a safe, respectful, and inclusive place.

As a public flagship university, we have precisely the duty and the expertise to use our minds, our knowledge and our dedication to meet this moment. We will hold a teach-in early in December, featuring experts from across the campus discussing the broad implications of the election for our rights and liberties, our security, our health and welfare, and our capacity for community. We also encourage faculty who are equipped to do so to use their own knowledge and skill as teachers to help all our students to continue to learn and think about the challenges we face as a nation going forward, and to do so in a thoughtful and independent fashion.

My final call is for all of us to work toward fulfilling the wish that Maalouf set at the end of his book: “For this book, neither a literary work nor a diversion, I make a different wish. May my grandson, growing up and finding it one day by chance on the family bookshelves, look through the pages, read a passage or two, then put it back in the dusty corner where he found it, shrugging his shoulders and marveling that in his grandfather’s day such things still needed to be said.”

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