

November 10, 2016

Dear Team:

The election Tuesday was a significant moment in American history, and one that provoked strong reactions across the political spectrum. One of our College's core values is that we embrace diversity in ideas, disciplines, convictions, and people. However, I realize the run-up to the election often used painful and inappropriate dialogue which has threatened the perceived safety and security of our community. I pledge to you that our College will remain a welcoming community of all backgrounds and beliefs and will never be one that tolerates intimidation or disrespect.

This contentious election has made me reflect a lot about the history of America.

This is an amazing country! Starting with our founding when we stood up against the mighty British empire with our Declaration of Independence and started down a 200+ year path of democracy with an enduring Constitution. Our accomplishments are too numerous to mention but suffice it to say America has created the modern era with the development of the internet, mass production of automobiles, air flight, transoceanic cables, cell phones for instant communication, and great medicines. It was America who joined the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and led the global fight against smallpox. And it was Americans who sacrificed precious blood and treasure to thwart evil worldwide – becoming the sole hegemon and guarantor of global peace and a shining beacon for the rest of the world.

We have also committed great acts of horror against the indigenous American Indians and slaves with periods of discrimination against minorities and immigrants who have followed our shiny beacon and helped build this great nation. Injustice and social and economic inequities continue today, from violence in our inner cities to the discrimination suffered by the LGBTQIA community and other disenfranchised members of our communities.

However, these national achievements and failings do not define America. Nor does a single person or political movement. The greatness of America is our character and heart. Alex Tocqueville said it better "The greatness of America lies not in being more enlightened than any other nation, but rather in her ability to repair her faults." It is this greatness and courage that led to the Emancipation Proclamation, women suffrage, the Civil Rights Act, and same-sex marriage.

As somebody who has seen every nature of tin-pot dictators, monarchs, and presidents-for-life, I am excited about the election of a new President. I look forward to bold new ideas to address the social injustices and health inequities in our communities. Today more than ever we must



stand together and reaffirm the values we cherish and have fought for: liberty, equality, and justice.

As a college of public health, our efforts and mission do not change. We strive every day for a better tomorrow with a focus on disease prevention, health equity, healthy communities, and social justice. It is up to all of us to help shape the legacy of our great nation in years to come. Respect differing opinions, show compassion for those who are disenfranchised or discriminated against, and commit to work together to solve injustices and inequalities - because this is what defines us as a nation and makes America great.

Dean Meza will be hosting a forum next week for all faculty, staff, and students who wish to share their thoughts. Details will follow.

Always listening,
Ask

Ali S. Khan, MD, MPH

Retired Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS

Dean and Professor

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