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**From:** Office of the President  
**Sent:** Monday, February 24, 2020  
**Subject:** Letter from Interim President Harroz



*The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA.*  
*Office of the President*

February 24, 2020

Dear OU Community,

We are all weary of racially charged incidents occurring within our university community. Now, for the second time in less than two weeks, I find myself addressing a faculty member's use of racially offensive language in the classroom.

The professor, a faculty member in History, read from a historical document that used the "N-word" repeatedly. While she could have made the point without reciting the actual word, she chose otherwise. Her issuance of a "trigger warning" before her recitation does not lessen the pain caused by the use of the word. For students in the class, as well as members of our community, this was another painful experience. It is common sense to avoid uttering the most offensive word in the English language, especially in an environment where the speaker holds the power.

After the incident that occurred less than two weeks ago, we immediately began working on a number of action steps. The first is a new required diversity, equity, and inclusion training regimen for all OU faculty, staff, and administration to complete. This training will address our implicit bias, it will force us to consider our words and actions and the implications that follow, and more. While students already engage in this type of training, for the first time our faculty and staff will be required to participate as well. We are also developing an incident response protocol, that quickly employs culturally restorative justice practices designed to create a pathway to reconciliation through education and the changing of behavior. We will be providing more details on these and other action steps in the near future, and we will continue to engage thought leaders among our student body, faculty, staff, and alumni to ensure we address this boldly, honestly, and with clear eyes. While it is unfortunate that another incident would occur before we could roll out this action plan, we are resolute in addressing these matters with decisive action. It is our responsibility to ensure that OU fulfills its promise to lead in bringing society closer together.

Sincerely,

Joseph Harroz, Jr.  
Interim President