

July 30, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

As leaders in higher education, we have called on presidents to speak to injustices and take bold steps because our institutions hold a pivotal place in the making of American democracy. Justice and equality need to guide our missions.

Part of our work means re-visiting difficult moments, looking directly at them and taking steps toward change. In 2020, very real tensions face us as we approach the centenary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. We recognize the effort it took to get to that moment in history – but also know that history is not merely about moments but also about movements. As we know from that moment, the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment failed to enfranchise many – African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Native American, and those with disabilities. Today, access to both education – and to the vote – remains under challenge.

That's why we are writing. We are asking leaders of higher education to join us online on August 26<sup>th</sup> at 9PM ET for [Women Take the Stage](#) – a free, multi-ethnic concert and rally to increase votes by and for women before the November election. Top musicians, changemakers, and activist icons gather for a virtual broadcast that celebrates noisemakers for equality and justice. It reminds us that the vote addresses gender and race and education.

With the Fall of 2020 beginning on campuses across the country, in a situation of unprecedented pandemic, economic instability, calls for anti-racist structural change and challenges to voting rights, the Centennial of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment offers an opportunity to recognize both the struggle to gain the vote **and** the ongoing struggle to uphold fair, safe and accessible elections. Higher education can lead in this work in many ways. We do so through curriculum and campus activities, as thought leaders and as activists, as artists and as scientists. We collaborate with communities who become part of the work we do.

Please join your voice with ours – invite your students, alumni, faculty and staff to the event – link to it on your web pages and join the social media campaign as part of today's labor for voting rights and freedom. You can find shareable media assets at [womentakethestage.org/media](http://womentakethestage.org/media). Most crucially, we hope you will pause on August 26 to use the power of education to lead us toward a more just future.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to send them to [womentakethestage@gmail.com](mailto:womentakethestage@gmail.com).

Cordially,

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