

### Social injustices at KU

One major example of social injustice on a big state university's campus would be the issue of the wealth gap. There are many students who can barely afford the ever-inflating tuition without working as much as they can manage, and they sit right next to other students who live in the most expensive buildings on campus and wear name brand clothing paid for with their parents' money. KU actually just had to open a campus cupboard because so many students were barely able to afford food. Knowing that some people can barely afford to survive while getting an education while other students can live luxuriously is ridiculous. The cost of attendance combined with the existing issues of income inequality make this problem of a divided campus.

This division causes a tension any time anything gets political on campus, like whenever there is a protest on campus or even just a discussion in class. Often times, the upper-income students lean conservative, and the middle to lower-income students all tend to lean liberal. These ideologies clash frequently, like a couple years ago when the group Young Americans for Freedom, while only comprised of 9 people (only one was a woman and they were all white), many students were affected by their hateful rhetoric and decided to protest their meetings until the group ultimately fizzled. The couple of months when this happened, though, were very tense on the entire campus, especially considering that this was happening right before the general election of 2016.

[video of one of the meetings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWZ5LF77oHs> ]

While this doesn't seem to have much to do with the environment, understanding that more and more people with less and less money while the rich keep getting richer, AKA the increasing gap in wealth, is a major hurdle to thwarting climate change. We see this constantly in our society, especially in areas where people of different socioeconomic backgrounds interact with each other, like on our college campuses. In our capitalistic society, money is power, and when only a few people have most of the money, the power, in this country, and they get that money through forces that support the fossil fuel industry, there will be a harder battle to fight in order to work for renewable energy. While the ideal "all men are created equal" is an outdated phrase that could use a rewording, it is a great concept. Updating this to "all people are inherently equal" would be more current. Regardless, the amount of money a person owns shouldn't define their worth, and before any major issue within the realm of environmentalism is resolved, this issue will have to be addressed.

In order to combat wealth inequality, I would first advocate for a restructuring of our tax system. People should pay a proportionate amount of taxes based on their income and need- no exceptions. Accounting for this, healthcare should not only be accessible, but free for everyone. This is a radical idea in America but is standard in so many other places in the world that it

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seems absurd that Americans don't already have this system in place. Free accessible healthcare will allow people to live their lives without any concern about their wellbeing. This should also entail an expanded, updated version of food stamps that allow people basic access to healthy food, regardless of familial or employment status. We live in one of the wealthiest and most powerful countries in the world- there is absolutely no reason people should be struggling to survive.

Making change on a personal level would be hard in the fight against wealth inequality, so my main plan would be to find candidates who support these policies of free healthcare and accessible healthy food. Reaching out to these candidates and then encouraging voters to support them would be essential in the road to change. Additionally, assisting voters with registration and how and where to vote would be key in this process.

Closing the wealth gap in America would be impossible to do with one or two grand gestures, so any little victory should be celebrated. Progress will be slow, but it is essential to the wellbeing of this country, our species, and our planet.