



May 19, 2022

Dear campus community,

I am saddened to once again be writing to you in the wake of another mass casualty event in our nation. Last Saturday in Buffalo, N.Y., ten persons were killed and three more injured, most of them Black, in what the *New York Times* called “one of the deadliest racist massacres in recent American history.” It has taken me a few days to process this atrocity and share a message with you that communicates condolences, grief, and hope.

I grieve with the families whose losses leave them irretrievably broken and with a community for whom the notions of trust and progress may now exist only in fond memories. I grieve for a heart so darkened by racial hatred that a ridiculous conspiracy theory, designed to sway the weak-minded and fearful, could trigger such devastation. And I grieve for our nation that continues to demonstrate its inability, or unwillingness, to work together to counter the voices that promote hate, prejudice, and violence.

The Gun Violence Archive tweeted on May 17 that the United States has suffered 203 mass shootings in 34 states and the District of Columbia in the first 137 days of 2022. This is almost inconceivable to me, and there’s a great risk of becoming desensitized to the sheer volume of violence. “Violence begets violence; hate begets hate; and toughness begets a greater toughness. It is all a descending spiral, and the end is destruction — for everybody. Along the way of life, someone must have enough sense and morality to cut off the chain of hate,” said Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

As you process your emotions over this event and so many others, I encourage you to be that “someone.” There is no role for complacency: Hatred is not passive, it is active, and we must be intentional in our opposition to it. If we are to help stem the growing tide of prejudice and violence, we must be instruments of peace. I have said before that our diversity at USC Upstate is our strength; that teaching and learning in this environment leads us all to work with and value people from dramatically different backgrounds, then take that spirit into the community and the global marketplace.

If you would benefit from professional support during this time, remember that several options are available to you. Contact [Counseling Services](#) online or at (864) 503-5195, or the Student Affairs office at (864) 503-5107.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bennie L. Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Bennie L. Harris  
Chancellor