

Responding to racist threats

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To the editor:

What does it mean to be an American and to protect and defend America? America is more than just a land and a people. Above all, America is an idea and an ideal, one that is most succinctly and eloquently defined in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

This is an ideal to which imperfect people have aspired for almost 240 years. To this end, the preamble of our Constitution commits Americans to the process of forming "a more perfect Union," a process made possible, in part, by Article V, which defines the procedures for amending the Constitution itself; thus, allowing for our collective redemption from our former, collective failings.

If, as the Constitution charges, we are to "establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity," we must be vigilant in ensuring that these blessings are never denied to any of our fellow citizens. As Martin Luther King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Sometimes injustice is played out on a national or an international stage, and sometimes it occurs closer to home. On Thursday, Nov. 12, when someone posted an anonymous, racist threat on the social-media application Yik Yak, members of the Michigan Tech community and of the surrounding community responded swiftly and aggressively to make clear that this is not who we are and that such threats will not be tolerated.

The administration and Michigan Tech Public Safety took immediate action to notify the campus community of the threat and, working with Yik Yak, to identify the alleged perpetrator and ensure that he was apprehended.

Students were quick to organize a series of events, including a peaceful and highly disciplined protest march on Sunday, Nov. 15; a second demonstration on campus on Wednesday, Dec. 2; and a constructive and well-organized community panel later that evening. Many students, faculty, staff, administrators and people from the surrounding community participated in these events. Many others, I know, have lent their support in other, less-public ways.

Having worked at Michigan Tech for over 25 years, having lived and raised a family in this community, and having witnessed all of these events, I'm proud to be part this community. It takes all of us working together to continue to build that "more perfect union," and this collective response represents the best of what America is and can be.

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