

Acklin, Tim

From: Kate Parker <kparker@uwlax.edu>
Sent: Monday, June 1, 2020 8:00 AM
To: Acklin, Tim
Cc: Ariel Beaujot
Subject: La Crosse Reads Letter of Support for Hear, Here project

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Hi Tim,

Attached please find my letter of support for the *Hear, Here* project. Please don't hesitate to let me know if I can assist in any other way. Take care.

Dear City Planning Commission,

I write on behalf of La Crosse Reads, a city-wide reading initiative I co-founded in 2016, to support funding for the *Hear, Here* project through the Capital Budget. *Hear, Here* partners with many organizations that support positive change and action in our community, and is particularly well-connected with other arts & culture organizations like La Crosse Reads. *Hear, Here* is not only a rich archive of stories--many of them marginalization and untold--of our City's history, but is also committed to important and necessary social justice work in our community.

In 2016, we partnered with *Hear, Here* to develop programming around our first community read, Ernest Gaines's *A Lesson Before Dying* (a novel about an African American man on death row for a crime he didn't commit). Part of the goal of this Read was to encourage our community to grapple with the racist undercurrents flowing through our own city. Together with *Hear, Here* and the City's Human Rights Commission, among other partners, we brought the internationally-acclaimed author and public speaker James Loewen to facilitate a conversation at City Hall around equity, diversity, and inclusion in our area. In addition, Loewen garnered regional attention by designating La Crosse a Sundown Town, which lead Mayor Tim Kabat and former Mayor John Medinger to pledge to work for equity in our community.

We partnered again with *Hear, Here* in 2018 when our La Crosse Read was centered on another historically-underrepresented group in our community: the Hmoob. We read *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* by Kao Kalia Yang, and as part of our community programming around this work, *Hear, Here* developed and led a specialized tour focusing on stories of Hmoob immigration in the La Crosse area. The tour highlighted local stories and histories which resonated with Yang's memoir, elevating those voices from our community to join the novel's weaving of a rich and varied tapestry of Hmoob experience in the upper Midwest. *Hear, Here* thus not only served as a key community partner, but a treasure trove of community stories, particularly those that have too long gone unheard.

The significance of the *Hear, Here* project in our community cannot be overstated. It is helping to advance equity and inclusion in the La Crosse community in its partnerships and rich archive. La Crosse Reads strongly supports the continuation of *Hear, Here* as a community resource through secured funding from the City's

Capital Budget. We look forward to continued partnerships with *Hear, Here* as we work together towards a more fair, just, and equitable La Crosse community.

Sincerely,

Kate Parker, Ph.D.

Co-founder, La Crosse Reads and Director of the Institute for Social Justice



Kate Parker

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*We should be careful
Of each other, we should be kind
While there is still time.*
- Philip Larkin, "[The Mower](#)"

