**Joint Note on *Tales of Two Americas:  Stories of Inequality in a Divided Nation*, edited by John Freeman**

There has never been just a single tale of America.  John Freeman’s book, *Tales of Two Americas:  Stories of Inequality in a Divided Nation*, is a reminder of this reality.  As the first anthology ever selected for KU’s Common Book program, we are also hopeful that our fellow students, faculty, and staff colleagues will experience the book as an invitation to engage the following questions together:

* Can we relate our individual experiences to others whose identities and circumstances might vary from our own?
* Can we consider points of view we have never previously imagined or given serious thought?
* Can we listen to the stories people tell and stay with the sometimes contradictory, uncomfortable, provocative, and telling silences that exist between them?
* Can we learn to disagree and debate one another in the ethics of our times?
* Can we contribute our own stories with a spirit of mutual regard, a hope for greater understanding, and ultimately—a sense of enlivened community at KU and beyond?

Being introduced to the thirty-six different perspectives that make up Freemen’s anthology is a privilege, much like being part of a beautifully diverse community like KU. Our community spans different disciplines, social identities, and geographic origins, all of which make us uniquely us. As a first-year student, you come to college and become not only a member of the campus but also a citizen of a bigger world. This book will challenge you to pay attention to the conversations around you and think about your part in these important interactions.

Freeman argues that “each of us in America could have grown up someone else had the universe’s mysterious finger touched a different key.”  Read from beginning to end or through choice selections here and there, this collection provides us with the stories necessary to begin in collective wonder about whether—and how—that possibility actually matters.