Dear Wildcat:

Welcome to the University of Kentucky, a community of scholars. Thousands of UK faculty, staff and student leaders are preparing for, and eagerly awaiting, your arrival. In advance of your first week of classes, we would like to familiarize you with your first assignment as a UK student – one that we hope will inspire thoughtful and respectful dialogue on campus.

Each year a committee of students, faculty and staff select a book for incoming students to read during the summer months. The Common Reading Experience is an opportunity to join your classmates in the shared exploration of a single book and its themes.


Together, they share an intertwined story about how we shape and interrogate our bias; the fragility of life and compelling nature of our humanity; the power of reconciliation over retribution; and the personal strength to overcome turmoil and find peace. It is a story of magnanimity; it will elicit sometimes searing responses or memories, and call us to question subtle perspectives and differences.

As we process their stories, we need to be conscious of all the dynamics the story involves. We want this to be a safe and shared experience. And the challenge and opportunity of a campus like ours is that this experience will take place among a diverse collection of backgrounds, viewpoints and characteristics.

Through extensive and ongoing research, we know that most often victims of sexual violence know their assailants. But other times, such as the instance recounted in this book, the assailant is a stranger. As a university family, our campus is committed to intervention and prevention of these acts, as well as supporting those who have been victimized. We know these are not easy conversations, and we must proceed with a respectful and informed dialogue in a safe and accepting community.

Let us also use this opportunity to facilitate the continued creation of a place that is both diverse and inclusive, where students celebrate distinctiveness, expand perspective, self-reflect and question our bias. We must embrace these differences rather than feeling threatened by them.

On the following page, we’ve included a list of resources at UK that are available to you in case you need to reach out to others. A university campus is a worthy place for an exchange of ideas. In reaching that lofty goal we constantly strive to foster a welcoming and supportive environment for that dialogue.

Whether you like or dislike the book, the discussions that result from this thought-provoking story are at the heart of what it means to be a student at the University of Kentucky. I encourage you to process and communicate with other students, faculty, staff and family as you engage with and read *Picking Cotton*. Together, we are committed to making this assignment and your time at the University of Kentucky a rich and rewarding college experience.

Sincerely,

Eli Capilouto
President

More information on the Common Reading Experience can be found at: [www.uky.edu/CommonReading](http://www.uky.edu/CommonReading)
University of Kentucky Campus Resources

Counseling Center
Provides confidential psychological counseling to enrolled UK students (see website for eligibility details) as well as consultation and outreach services to those who are connected to UK students or have broader campus concerns
201 Frazee Hall (859) 257-8701
www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Counseling

Martin Luther King Center
Fosters intercultural competence and works to prepare students for engagement in a global society
313 Blazer Hall (859) 257-4130

Office for Institutional Diversity
Serves the University community to promote diversity and inclusion
311 Main Building (859) 257-9293

Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity
Promotes an environment free of discrimination and inequity
13 Main Building (859) 257-8927

Violence Intervention and Prevention Center
Provides support and advocacy for those in the UK community impacted by interpersonal violence
Frazee Hall, Lower Level (859) 257-3574

The Office of New Student & Parent Programs/Common Reading Experience Program
Provides support to new students and families transitioning to the University and throughout the first year of college
567 Patterson Office Tower (859) 257-6597

Kentucky and National Resources

Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center
Serves those in the Central Kentucky area impacted by sexual violence
Business Line: (859) 253-2615
24-hour Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
This nationwide number will connect you to the nearest rape crisis program.
www.bluegrassrapecrisis.org

Green House17
Domestic violence program serving Central Kentucky
Business Line: (859) 233-0657
24-hour Hotline: 1-800-544-2022
www.greenhouse17.org

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)
24-hour Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
This nationwide number will connect you to the nearest rape crisis program.
www.rainn.org

The National Domestic Violence Hotline
24-hour Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
www.thehotline.org

Innocence Project
(212) 364-5340
www.innocenceproject.org

Common Reading Experience Resources

University of Kentucky Campus Resources

Counseling Center
Provides confidential psychological counseling to enrolled UK students (see website for eligibility details) as well as consultation and outreach services to those who are connected to UK students or have broader campus concerns
201 Frazee Hall (859) 257-8701
www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Counseling

Martin Luther King Center
Fosters intercultural competence and works to prepare students for engagement in a global society
313 Blazer Hall (859) 257-4130

Office for Institutional Diversity
Serves the University community to promote diversity and inclusion
311 Main Building (859) 257-9293

Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity
Promotes an environment free of discrimination and inequity
13 Main Building (859) 257-8927

Violence Intervention and Prevention Center
Provides support and advocacy for those in the UK community impacted by interpersonal violence
Frazee Hall, Lower Level (859) 257-3574

The Office of New Student & Parent Programs/Common Reading Experience Program
Provides support to new students and families transitioning to the University and throughout the first year of college
567 Patterson Office Tower (859) 257-6597

Kentucky and National Resources

Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center
Serves those in the Central Kentucky area impacted by sexual violence
Business Line: (859) 253-2615
24-hour Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
This nationwide number will connect you to the nearest rape crisis program.
www.bluegrassrapecrisis.org

Green House17
Domestic violence program serving Central Kentucky
Business Line: (859) 233-0657
24-hour Hotline: 1-800-544-2022
www.greenhouse17.org

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)
24-hour Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
This nationwide number will connect you to the nearest rape crisis program.
www.rainn.org

The National Domestic Violence Hotline
24-hour Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
www.thehotline.org

Innocence Project
(212) 364-5340
www.innocenceproject.org