



## SAINT ANN'S SCHOOL

Vincent Tompkins  
Head of School

May 31, 2020

Dear Saint Ann's Families, Faculty, Staff and Students,

Throughout our nation's history, violence has been visited upon African Americans, sometimes with such frequency, and with such cover of official sanction, as to seem routine to those of us whose race and privilege render us immune from it. The police killing of George Floyd, coming hard on the heels of the killings of other African Americans in the past weeks and months, renders this a moment when all of us who abhor the systemic racism that produces violence and gives it cover must once again demand its end and demand justice for its victims.

As I write this, cities across the nation are convulsed by protest and outrage. That outrage is fueled not just by specific instances of racial violence but by a pandemic that has visited illness, hardship, and death with particular virulence on black and brown people in New York City and around the country, and by the reality that bias and systemic oppression are so deeply intertwined with other aspects of our culture and society as to be undeniable. When in 2020 an African American man cannot go birding in Central Park without having to be confronted by a white person's racist fears, when Asian Americans encounter daily racial threats and insults fed by prejudice from the halls of power, when murder motivated by anti-Semitism is visited on houses of worship it becomes impossible to separate oneself from the culture that spawns this behavior. And it becomes insufficient to simply state one's abhorrence for the actions of others.

I committed myself as Head of School to the task of making Saint Ann's a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse institution. That commitment is a promise to the people of color who come to our school to work or to learn, or who entrust us with their children that I will not waver in my efforts nor fail to support them—whether in times like this when racism is overt and external, nor in the moments when it appears within our school. And it is a commitment to our white families that their children will graduate from Saint Ann's with a sophisticated understanding of this country's history and the deep roots of white supremacy, an understanding that will enable them to do the anti-racist work that so many of them are taking to the streets right now. If those of us who are white choose to be



bystanders in this crisis; if we wait for people of color to once again explain to us the pain that racism inflicts instead of educating ourselves and one another; if we cease in our efforts to extirpate bias of all kinds within our community we betray a sacred trust.

I find it difficult in this dark hour to share Dr. King's belief that the arc of the moral universe bends towards justice. But now is the time when those who *wish* it so must do all they can to *make* it so—in their own communities, their families, their schools. The change I seek is not the work of a day or a week, but it is also not the work of some other city, some other school, some future time. In the coming week we will create opportunities for faculty, staff and students to meet and discuss recent events and their implications for our school and our society. We should seize this moment with the impatience of youth and all the wisdom and persistence we can muster.

Love,

Vince