



# A Message from Echo Horizon School

Dear Echo Horizon Community,

The concept of “safety” has been top of mind over the last few months as the world has grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic. We have bought gloves and face masks, stocked up on supplies, practiced social distancing, and holed up in our homes awaiting the passing of this new threat.

As a white American, the COVID-19 pandemic may be my threat of the moment, but it disproportionately affects black and brown Americans. Yet, even so, for millions of black and brown Americans, this threat pales in comparison to the one that greets them every day of their lives—the threat of racism and violence against them and their families. This insidious threat is always present and cannot be stopped with a vaccine.

Breonna Taylor, age 26, was killed in her Kentucky home by police officers looking for a man who didn't even live in her building. Ahmaud Arbery, age 25, was out for a jog in Georgia when he was followed and killed by two white men who suspected him of robbery. George Floyd, age 46, was held to the ground by a white officer kneeling on his neck, unable to breathe, during an arrest. Author Roxanne Gay mourns this “senseless” loss of life in her article, *Remember, No One is Coming to Save Us*: “These black lives mattered. These black people were loved. Their losses to their friends, family, and communities, are incalculable.”

Three of my brilliant, beloved leadership team members are black and one is Chicana, and among them, they are bringing up seven children of color. Three of these children are boys of color who are disproportionately targeted with violence. Last year, in our newest class, we admitted 50 percent students of color. So many of you, the recipients of this letter, are bringing up beautiful children of color.

The lovely city where our historic building sits has put into effect a 4pm curfew due to racial unrest. Our Echo Horizon community is a multicultural, multiracial one, founded on inclusion and made truly exceptional by our diversity. We know that diversity IS excellence and that children learn and thrive in communities that are a mosaic of beautiful colors, abilities, ethnicities, languages, ideas, and beliefs. We believe and value this diversity and nothing will get in the way of our commitment to it. As you grieve at home in your own way about the present situation and the evil that is racism, our exceptional faculty and staff are struggling with their own emotions and with the weight of how to share honestly with our children the reality of racism in our nation. One thing is clear—we will not shy away from these conversations and lessons. We are committed to a curriculum that teaches an appreciation of

diversity, has a commitment to equity, and shares a lived experience of inclusion. We will speak to students about these important principles in age-appropriate ways. As educators, we believe that it is our moral obligation to address history past and present in developmentally appropriate ways. Not doing so would be an injustice and a cycle we must not perpetuate. I ask that our entire community stand together to combat systemic racism now and always.

As you know, I am at my core an optimist and I will never give up hope, even in these dark moments. That said, I acknowledge, from my position of whiteness, that hope and optimism are a privilege. Yet, somehow, brilliant people of color have held onto hope for centuries, risking everything in the fight for equity, peace, and justice. I have benefitted immensely from their sacrifices. One such brilliant person is poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou, and I close, at a time when I can muster no words to close this letter myself, with her wise and heroic words.

### "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

With love and sadness,  
Peggy

#### References:

Angelou, Maya. "Still I Rise," *And Still I Rise: A Book of Poems*, 1978.  
Gay, Roxanne. "Remember, No One is Coming to Save Us", *theNew York Times*, May 30, 2020.

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