

June 1, 2020

Dear members of TeamIPS,

I'm sitting in my home trying to come up with the right words to express how I'm feeling after bearing witness to the traumatic killing of George Floyd and the ensuing protests and riots that have impacted our city and country.

I am a Black woman. A mother of Black children. A wife to a Black man. The granddaughter of a Black man who was arrested and jailed for protesting against the unjust treatment of Black people in his community. I can not separate my experience in this country or the history of my ancestors in this country from how I've experienced this last several days. Feelings of anger, grief, despair, and fear to name only a few.

I know that I am not alone in these emotions or the toll they've taken on me this weekend. Not only are we still in the midst of a pandemic, working to mitigate a virus that has killed more than 100,000 of our fellow citizens in three months time, but we are—from my perspective—being asked again to reckon directly with the dark history of our country. A history that finds Black people defined first as not even human and then, once forced to be acknowledged as human, systematically treated—through both individual actions as well as government policies—as inferior people.

As a people, we are tired of this struggle. This means, our Black parents are tired. Our Black colleagues are tired. Our Black students are tired. I hope that, this time, we will respond to the pleas for justice with an affirmation that we are indeed ready to engage so that we can begin healing from our racist past and imagine a new future. A new future that allows us to engage peacefully and create real solutions. A future where respect, love, and understanding is given to all people instead of some.

Because we are not free of the effects of our history. You can see it in the neighborhoods across our city. You can see it in our health and criminal justice systems. You can see it in the way our schools systems are organized, and you can see it in the outcomes that our schools produce.

My hope for TeamIPS is that we will bravely engage to set an example of the way forward. In the coming weeks, we will share opportunities on how to participate in a conversation on racism and the impact it has had and continues to have on our community. In addition, I've included a list of just a few resources that I believe will help build our collective knowledge, and I hope you will take the time to read, reflect, and then determine the best way to act. It will not be easy nor will it happen overnight. But, we will fail our children if we leave them a legacy of racism that we can begin undoing now.

In the days ahead, please be sure to take care of your body, mind, and spirit. I pledge to do the same. Together, we will forge our way forward. Together, we will find a way.

Be safe and be well,

Aleesia