

## **Black Lives and Other Matters: A Call to ACTION**

*“No label, no slogan, no party, no skin color, and no religion is more important than the human being.”*

James Baldwin

I LOVE Echo Horizon School. At its core, it is one of the best institutions I have ever been a part of. The adults in our community, particularly the parent body, are hands down the most sincere, most authentic, most intelligent, most loving and most inclusive I have ever been around! I have the great pleasure and blessing of working for and with the most dedicated, dynamic, thoughtful, visionary and caring head of school I have ever known. I firmly believe that our dedication and commitment to what it means to be a diverse, equitable and inclusive school is second to none! We are not the “website school” that puts diversity, equity and inclusion ONLY on display in the online space... our DEI efforts are very much in motion in our classroom spaces and hallways. AND having said all of the above, I must tell you that Echo Horizon School is NOT a utopia. Within our community are African American students and families who grapple with and try to make sense of the microaggressions that occur in EHS classrooms, playgrounds and other school community spaces. The weight of the world is on their shoulders right now. No matter how loving you are towards them, the world is giving them a very different message about their worth and for a long time has been making a strong case that their feelings, dreams, and lives don't matter. I am proud to serve as Associate Head of this school. But make no mistake about it, when I enter the doors of our school, I bring with me my despair, hurt, anger, and hopelessness. Some days it feels lighter. Some days it feels heavier. But it never goes away.

### **What can/should our community do?**

***Start with self reflection.*** It starts with every human being looking at themselves in the mirror. What beliefs do I hold? How did those beliefs come to be? How have my beliefs caused pain and suffering for my community members? How has my silence on these issues signaled to police officers, the court system and our fellow Americans that the lives of African American men, women, and children matter not?

***Educate yourself.*** Assume you have bias. That is the lens through which we all see the world. Thinking you are different or “further along the spectrum” means more death and suffering for more African American men, women, girls, and boys. The stories we have been told about white supremacy must be dismantled. The supposed truths we have been told about black folk and other people of color must be unlearned, taken apart, and thrown away forever.

***Do your own homework.*** It is tempting to want to talk about these issues with an African American person, a woman or man you barely know or haven't spoken to in years or even someone you count as a good friend. DON'T... at least not yet. Not until you've done your own work. As I've laid out, being black in America is exhausting. The burden of educating our white brothers and sisters adds to our distress, anxiety and exhaustion. Lastly, ***ACT, ENGAGE...*** do something.

***Change the world by changing your little corner of it!*** Why wait until tomorrow. Start today! Do it for our school community. Do it for your children, for your neighbor's children, for their nieces and nephews, for my children... for the world's children and the children of generations to come so that they may never know a world where a slogan like Black Lives Matter is necessary. I am here for you if you have any questions about any of the above or if you are motivated to be an ally or perhaps an ***accomplice*** ([\*Ally or Accomplice: The Language of Activism\*](#)), but may still feel confused or insecure about where to start.

All my best,

Roger Bridges

Associate Head of School & Co-Chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

#BlackLivesMatter #EchoHorizonSchool #LOVEeatshateforbreakfast #WeareJOYFUL  
#WeareENGAGED #WeareLEARNING

### **RESOURCES:**

#### **Self Reflection:**

- [Critical SELF REFLECTION Notebook](#)

#### **Homework for Self-Education:**

- READ *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon To White America* by Michael Eric Dyson
- READ *We Were Eight Years In Power* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- READ *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo

#### **How might I engage with others?**

- [How To Talk About RACE](#)
- [Teaching Tolerance - Talking To Kids About Race and Racism](#)
- [Six Steps to SPEAK UP!](#)