



Middlesex

David J. Beare
Head of School

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Dear Members of the Middlesex Community,

I write to you in challenging times. Even as we reel from the effects of COVID-19, we are again confronted with the reality of yet more unwarranted violence against black and brown persons in our nation. The fractures are deep, and the anguish felt by many in our community – particularly persons of color – is real.

Like many of you, I am concerned by the continued erosion of the security, in both feeling and in fact, of persons of color in American society. Here, I refer not only to the recent tragic and deeply unsettling events that have captured headlines – the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others – but also to the fact that, as many have observed, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed in high relief long-standing inequalities. People of color are disproportionately affected by the virus and the economic hardships that follow in its wake. There is a disturbing rise in the number of xenophobic attacks on Asians and Asian Americans. Together, we lament these divisions in our nation, and these events call on us to consider what we can, and should, do in response.

I am heartened that Middlesex is well positioned to address these issues with humility, respect for a multiplicity of views, and support for all members of the community. This winter, we established a new standing committee on Community and Inclusion that is working to develop elements of a strategic plan that will identify key goals and issues for the School surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion work. That group will work to frame our school's conversations about and responses to those issues next year and in the years to come, and I will invite broad participation in those conversations. We must hear each other's stories and consider each other's ideas. We are all necessary to the vitality of this place and the effort to become the school community we want to be. Our school's ethos of being known and needed will be our guide, and there is much work for us to do.

In the final pages of his book, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*, philosophy professor and ethicist Kwame Anthony Appiah notes that there is an underlying identity that binds us all: our humanity. Appiah quotes the dramatist Terence, a slave from Roman Africa, who wrote, "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto." I am human, I think nothing human alien to me.

That call, from across centuries, can speak to us now. We must hear and see the suffering of individuals, and we must also understand at a deep level that the particular experience of individuals is not separate from the whole. We are bound by our common humanity – students, teachers, staff, parents, and alumni alike – to respond with compassion, care, and resolve.

If you have thoughts or feelings that I should hear, please send them. I have heard from many of you and welcome your response.

With warm regards,

David J. Beare
Head of School