

Dear Staff:

I am writing to address recent events inflamed by the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police and the needless, tragic deaths of black men, women and children through the years as a result of institutional and structural racism. I have wanted to address this since it happened, but feel inarticulate to convey any understanding of the suffering that people are experiencing right now. I am raw with emotion. I cannot imagine the pain that Black Americans are feeling in this moment or pretend to understand what must be endured on a daily basis. St. Mary's Home for Children condemns racism in any form. There is no place for that in an organization focused on hope and healing. Our administration and Board of Directors are committed to justice and equity.

We value diversity and hold a strong belief in equity. Our diversity has always been our strength. Children and families benefit from being supported by, and our youth find meaning and healing in, having positive role models that are racially, culturally and spiritually diverse. I recognize that many of our employees and many people we serve face racism through micro-aggressions, actual aggression/violence and insults to dignity on a daily basis; things that those of us with privilege do not have to endure.

This boiling point has been coming for a long time, inflamed by racist rhetoric at the highest levels. This has empowered and emboldened white supremacists and bad cops. It is long past time for change; for a reckoning of who we really are. It has, for many, forced introspection of how we think about race and hopefully allows us to be more expansive in our thinking about the impact of structural racism on people of color.

We hope to find a way for our St. Mary's community to acknowledge racism and how it negatively impacts people of color and find a way to stand together to have community impact that is meaningful. We need to find ways to lift each other up, support each other and find healing and hope together.

We all like to believe that we are "woke" and that we embrace diversity. However, we may have blinders on and sometimes we build and/or maintain systems and structures that do not promote equity and that oppress people of color. I do not like to think that I, our administration or our Board is guilty of this...but we need to know if we are. We are committed to hearing hard truths and working toward systemic change in our own community. We encourage you to share your thoughts, let your voice be heard and let us know how we can do better to create a more equitable and just environment for all. We will provide multiple opportunities for discussion. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me or speak with your supervisor so that we can listen and learn. All comments, opinions, feelings and thoughts are welcome. There will be no judgment, only a willingness to learn and be better.

Thank you for all you do to heal those we serve.

With Appreciation,

Carlene