

On Sat, May 30, 2020, 1:01 PM Pascal Losambe <losambep@columbusacademy.org> wrote:

Dear African American students:

As I watch the news, read social media posts and see videos of families pleading for change (once again), I too write this with a heavy heart. A mother recently shared that her son is afraid of leaving the house because he is afraid that people will not see his humanity, but see a Black man that is a threat to them and society. At this moment, I am very aware of my blackness and that of my wife and young children. I am aware of it as I leave the house to run errands, as I mow the lawn, as I go and get the mail from the mailbox, as I wear my mask, and as I sit on the deck at the back of my house. Notice I didn't say jogging because I would be lying. Despite the many narratives that you are being exposed to from a variety of sources, I want you to reflect on a few things:

1. You are valuable. We see your humanity as well as your individual gifts and talents. Your Blackness is beautiful.
2. Your Blackness is not a mistake. You stand on the shoulders of giants that have paved the way for you. Know our history, be proximate to it, and let the echoes and whispers of those that have gone before us allow you to find your voice. Then, use that voice to send waves into your present and future that will disrupt mediocrity and change structures, systems, and ways of being that keep you (us) contained, suffocated and disempowered.
3. Within each of you lie seeds that will bring change. Those seeds are your personal narratives and stories. Your stories will allow us to prepare fertile ground and create environments that will allow you to thrive. We are committed to running this race alongside you and committed to harvesting your many gifts and talents.
4. Don't suffer or process the current environment in isolation. School did not end when your final assignments were turned in. No. We aren't just here to unlock your academic potential, but position you to live a life worthy of your individual callings. We are here for you. Every adult knows that in order for you to truly fulfill your calling, you need to be secure in your identity and know your worth. So, assemble your affinity groups and use your creative spirits to find meaning in this time. Reach out to adults you trust and allow them to carry your load.
5. Practice mindfulness, prayer and meditation. Don't forget the lessons you have been taught about the importance of mindfulness. Stop and Breathe. As you breathe, remember George Floyd, Eric Garner, and the people they left behind, and populate your brain with oxygen and other essential nutrients that will allow you to use your frontal lobe networks more efficiently. That is where your creativity, rational thinking, and planning for the future resides.
6. Look for community networks outside of our school community. There are many young people who share the same emotions that you have right now. Find them, speak your truth, find strength in community and create plans of action that will bring change in the future. Now is a great time since many of these groups may be using virtual platforms.
7. Despite the polarizing reports and the myriad of reactions to recent events, particularly the murders of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery (remember to humanize them by using their names), know that Columbus Academy is committed to you. We are committed to live by our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Character Formation and Belonging.

We will continue to figure out ways to hold you up during this time. We love you.



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