

May 31, 2020

Dear Community of Woods,

I can remember when I was a schoolboy and learned for the first time about, what was described then as, the “hidden wound” of American racism. It was the notion that beyond white KKK men in their white hoods, there was a form of racism, systemic racism, that was tied into the warp and weft of our culture. It was an illuminating idea and a jarring one – illuminating, because I simply hadn’t thought of racism that way, and jarring, because it meant I could no longer relegate the whole subject of racism to those cowardly KKK men I’d seen in documentaries (whom, thankfully, I didn’t know) or those people I heard using the n-word (which, thankfully, was not a word allowed in my household).

How quaint and amateurish it seems now to think of the wound being “hidden,” when before our eyes we have seen communities of color so negatively and disproportionately affected by COVID-19 infections and deaths, and when before our eyes, we behold, in horror, another violent murder of an unarmed African-American man. These and other injustices are not hidden; they are weekly, daily before us. This week, specifically, we mourn the death of Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis, and we grieve for his family and loved ones.

When I hear of each senseless murder such as this one, I sit in silence, say the name of the victim, and I, then, try to imagine that person as my father or mother. I try to imagine that person as my son, my daughter. I imagine that person as my brother, my sister, my friend. I believe there lies a danger in abstraction – lest we forget that everyone is someone’s son or daughter, someone’s loved one. Though we have a culture that lures us into thinking that we are separate and individual, the deeper truth remains that we are inextricably interconnected.

Dr. King referred to this as the “inter-related structure of reality”:

In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men [and women] are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.

Thus, we can think of the Cup Foods of 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Minneapolis as 1,202 miles away . . . or we can think of it as being just down the street. We can think of Mr. Floyd's death as another uncomfortable news story . . . or it is the real, shared horror of all mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers.

At Woods we are committed to preparing our students to change the world. We believe in an education of the mind that opens eyes, expands perspectives, and provides a broader vision. We believe in an education of the heart that engenders the courage to stand up, to speak out, and to engage. And, we believe in a dream of our country that is larger than our present reality. My hope is that we honor Mr. Floyd (and Mr. Arbery and Ms. Taylor and Mr. Castile and Mr. Brown . . . and the many others slain) by continuing to summon the mind and the heart to craft “a single garment” that is inclusive and worthy of us all.

Sincerely,

Cotton Bryan  
Principal

If you are interested in anti-racist resources (books, websites, etc.), you will find a growing list from our faculty and admin team [here](#).