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June 1, 2020

Dear Winston Community:

As recent tragic events have unfolded alongside a seemingly endless onslaught of protests tied to anger and feelings of hopelessness, I write today with a strong community resolve that respect, empathy for others and justice are important concepts for us to embrace and persistently share with our students. Realizing the intensity of protests across our country over the past few days, and acknowledging the important reasons for these protests, we as educators and parents are given the challenge of how to communicate with our students and our children the issues and the actions that pervade our television screens and characterize our community responses. Some responses are peaceful and collaborative—and other responses have turned violent and have been marked by a multitude of frustrated voices and allegiances.

I can add to these voices with a powerful reminder of just what we stand for at The Winston School. I can share my compassion and our collective empathy for those who are in pain and for those who are suffering. I can also rely on our school's statement of diversity that depicts our values and principles as an institution that are so much a part of our community ethos. The statement noted herein reflects our values at Winston as well as those values that we deem important and precious as we educate children and emphasize what it means to be ethical, committed, kind and respectful.

The Winston School Diversity Statement, approved by the Winston School Board of Trustees, October 2, 2018, was a result of the collaborative efforts of staff and trustees in stating openly and proudly what we stand for as a school. The words are as follows:

*"The Winston School embraces and expects open-mindedness, compassion, and inclusiveness from all members of its community. We honor all aspects of what makes each individual unique. Respect, kindness, and empathy are paramount for building a strong, safe, and inclusive community that prepares students for lives in a multicultural society. Winston understands that personal and professional growth demand authenticity, integrity, freedom of expression, and civility of discourse. In delivering its educational program, Winston is committed to both recognizing the interdependence of each individual and group with the other members of the community as well as upholding its non-discrimination policy."*

In our times of hardship, uncertainty, and amidst violent actions and forceful protest, we can affirm with certainty that we stand by our beliefs at Winston and truly strive to teach our students with clarity and consistency these principles within our school's statement of diversity. Our hearts and our very souls are in pain across our nation and we are further thrust into a reality that our nation has

imperfections and inequities that extend our national pain and agony to an incredibly powerful extent.

I could say simply that “we will get through all this,” but I also must say with greater emphasis: we need to work harder and with increased fervor in combating the tragedies and the inequalities that pervade our nation. We can affirm, therefore, with full intensity of spirit and courage that we at Winston stand by our statement of diversity. We seek to avoid being mere bystanders to the despair and devastation being wrought upon our nation. We ourselves will therefore take action and take control of our own lives and our own organization in honest and forthright ways.

Indeed, we will also stand together in further affirming our support of our Winston School “roots” that are embedded in specific words that adorn our halls and classrooms. These “roots” are our core values of “responsibility, courage, citizenship, honesty, respect, imagination and caring.” These words can and will propel us forward towards inspired action and understanding. Our work together in reflecting upon our school’s diversity statement and our statement of core values through our “roots” are good starting points for further conversation and for further reflection.

The great African-American statesman and orator, Frederick Douglass, wrote in 1862: “There is a prophet within us, forever whispering that behind the seen is the immeasurable unseen.” Our collective tasks in the days, months and years to come are to take hold of this “immeasurable unseen” and together create a world within our own community that is characterized by justice, self-awareness, respect for others and personal courage. We can begin with vigorous conversations but we must move in short time towards embracing a collective action that builds and sustains a community awareness and support of our personal and organizational responsibilities and obligations.

I thank you for being part of our Winston School community.

Respectfully,

Peter S. Lewis  
Head of School