



A Message from Head of School

Brenda Crawley

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Decades ago, I began my journey into “diversity” work with fellow independent school educators from across the country. We quickly recognized that diversifying our schools was only one piece of the work. Supporting students of color and their families through mission, philosophy, curriculum and program spurred a movement toward “multicultural education”—a shift from a quantitative approach to a qualitative one. We had the revelation that a school’s diverse student population meant little if those children were not supported and affirmed in the school community. We learned that tolerance was more relevant to dealing with gum stuck on the bottom of a shoe; but validation and acknowledgment were indications of visibility and respect. Tolerating diversity was not enough. Our students of color needed to be seen, valued and affirmed.

As a woman of color, DEI (diversity, equity & inclusion) work is not something I can put down, postpone or avoid. In my role as a Quaker school leader, I have settled into a community that is grounded on the notion of not settling for injustice, stepping into conflict for the sake of what is right, and standing up for the rights of others. This is what we teach our children: stand up for good; stand up for others; stand up for those who need you to lift your voice on their behalf.

A few days ago I learned that Evan Gorski, a PMFS alum and engineering student at Temple University, was brutalized by Philadelphia police during a peaceful protest on Monday. The senseless violence imposed on Evan included being beaten and suffering through a police officer’s knee pressing his head and neck to the pavement. The parallel to George Floyd’s demise is startling. Evan was standing up for a fellow protestor: standing up for good.

I do not know Evan; I have never met him. And yet I have. He is every Plymouth Meeting Friends School student who learns that they have a voice. He is every Pre-K student who asks “why” and every sixth grader who says, “why not”. This week, Evan chose to step into the fray and not turn away. His actions were both life-saving and life-threatening. What could move an individual toward such risk and danger besides the combination of intention and hope?

Now, more than ever, our local and national communities are faced with answering a call to action. We can no longer claim to be part of one human race when some people are treated inhumanely because of race. It is not enough to not be racist. We must strive to be anti-racist. It is not enough to be an activist. We must choose to be active. In our PMFS community, we have the opportunity to build upon the partnership between school and home

as we talk about, teach and learn lessons of love, respect and honor for all people. This is the only way to uproot the hate and fear that spur such senseless violence.

I learned a few years ago that an ally is someone who stands behind you, should you need help. An accomplice, however, is someone who stands beside you, at the ready. An accomplice accepts that life-saving work can be life-threatening; yet they do not turn away.

We can move toward intention and hope while holding fast to our Quaker values. At our core, we believe that there is that of God in everyone. We can take action. We can be accomplices.

In peace and with intention,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda C. Crawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Brenda C. Crawley

Head of School