



Connecting with Kyla



Saturday, May 30, 2020

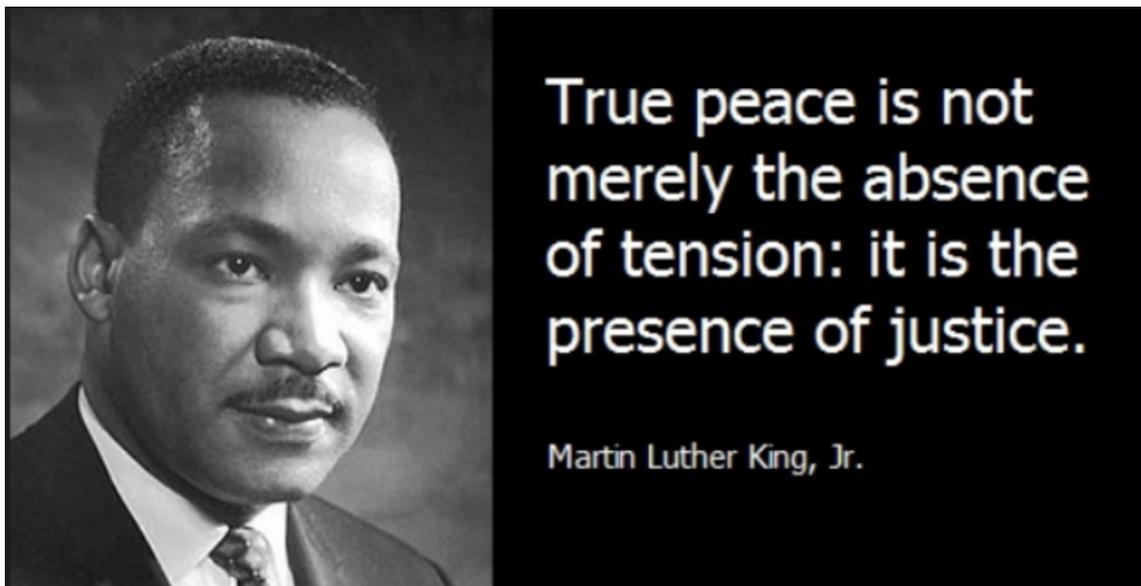
Dear Oakland Community,

I write today to join in the national call for justice as well to express my support of our students and families. I am outraged by George Floyd's death at the hands of the police. This outrage is only heightened by the recent murder of Ahmaud Arbery for simply jogging in a white neighborhood, and a string of other cases in which African American men had the police called on them to scapegoat their accusers' own misconduct and criminal acts.

I, too, demand that African Americans and all people of color receive the same respectful and just treatment by the authorities and our fellow citizens. Each of us must be a part of the change we need to see in our city and country. We must address institutional and interpersonal racism in all its forms.

To anyone who is protesting, I feel you. I share your outrage AND I want my Oakland family to be safe, heard, and valued. I want our city moving as one to finally face the difficult history that we have avoided for so long.

Over and over and over we hear and feel the same stories of racism and brutality. They stretch back generations and each new story reopens old wounds carried in families' memories. It is a disgraceful part of our national identity. This country is clearly moving away from justice. Overt racism has rebounded with leaders giving the green light to people to openly express the worst of humanity to each other, oftentimes under the cover of authority. Somehow, we can be faced with the same truths repeatedly, but never actually muster the collective will it takes to overcome these challenges.



My thoughts and concerns are always first and foremost with our students, families and staff. I think about how you are taking all of this in and coping, especially when compounded with the stress of facing COVID-19 over the past almost three months. I think about how these racist and unjust acts affect your own sense of self and development, and how so many of our parents, especially our African American parents, carry the burden of fear every time their sons and daughters walk out of their homes.

Of course, this is not abstract for me. My husband and I sat with our kids last night. With sirens in the background, we talked about oppression and injustice. We talked about not buying into the hate. We talked about being safe and what it means to be a young black person in this country. We talked while my heart was breaking for my kids, my husband, and myself, once again.

I am always humbled and inspired by our students' resilience, intelligence and fortitude. My hope rests with all of our children, and their capacity to move past the divisions, racism, bigotry and othering that have marked our country since long before its founding. I share their vision and belief in a just world where every person, of every race, belongs and is honored and celebrated.

We must work together to bend the moral arc back toward justice. These recent events have generated renewed urgency and importance for our collective efforts in that mission.

We will be working to hold wellness hours and restorative check-ins over the next few days for our students, families, and staff. More information will be shared soon.

We understand the desire to be involved in planned marches and actions. While we do not want students out due to COVID-19 safety precautions, if you participate, please be vigilant in wearing a mask, maintaining 6 feet apart, being aware of your surroundings, and not use violence under any circumstances. There is too much violence in our world and peace needs to be our path forward.

Please share your thoughts

In Unity,



Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell
Superintendent

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