



Personal Reflections

6/2/2020

Dear IMSA Community,

I'm mad as hell and can't take it anymore. I know this Personal Reflection is not going to be popular because it is a no-holds-back statement relating to the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man killed by White men while jogging; Breonna Taylor, a Black woman killed by the Louisville Kentucky police while sleeping; and George Floyd, a Black man killed by a Minneapolis police officer.

I'm angry because I don't want to write yet another statement about injustice. How many comments do we have to write each time the police kill a Black person, or a White person kills a Black person for simply being Black? How much outrage do we have to show when injustice occurs? In how many marches do we have to participate?

I'm disappointed in myself because I laid another burden on my Black Cabinet colleagues by asking them if we needed to make a statement to our IMSA community. As soon as I asked them, I was ashamed that I had to ask. While they were mourning these tragedies and wrestling with their own rage, sadness, trauma, impotence, etc., I was essentially asking them to set aside their own pain to consider how IMSA should respond. I'm saddened that words fail me to describe the pain our Black students, parents, and staff are experiencing today. I imagine that our entire IMSA community is experiencing this pain today.

Cornel West described what happened to George Floyd on May 25, 2020 in police custody as a public lynching. [The New York Times reconstructed what happened](#). You can read others' opinions and statements and draw your own conclusion.

Where does this tragedy leave us, and what should be our response as a community? Having just ended our Academic Year, I ask our families to gather around the kitchen table and explore their emotions in light of this tragedy and how they can respond. Consider that our Black moms and dads have already talked to their sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, and relatives about what it means to be Black in America in 2020. Even though my grandson is only nine years old, I have had to speak to him about these tragedies and try to protect him.

I ask our staff to reflect on these injustices and on how they can be even more sensitive to the trauma on top of trauma that fellow IMSA colleagues are experiencing. In the end, until racism and the systemic inequities are addressed and corrected; systemic inequities of unequal health care, unemployment, education, housing, and political representation, to name a few, that were magnified by the coronavirus pandemic; we will continue to see the results we are seeing. The system is producing the results for which it was created. If we want different results, we need to re-engineer the system.



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To re-engineer the system, I believe we need to create the conditions in our offices and classrooms to think differently, creatively, and ethically. I am asking the entire IMSA community to commit to our ongoing Equity and Excellence work that promotes racial and social justice.

Finally, I want to share with you some [resources and services available](#) on the Illinois Department of Public Health website if you or anyone you know needs someone to talk to during these times. You can also text “TALK” or “HABLAR” to the IDPH Call4Calm line at 55-2020 for free, emotional support.

Respectfully,

José M. Torres, Ph.D.
President