

# Sidwell Friends

Dear Friends,

I echo the sentiments and calls for action so eloquently communicated by Head of School Bryan Garman in [his email](#) to us last night. Bryan gives us wise advice regarding the grip in which racism currently holds this country and the world: “We can only begin to limit its power by listening, learning, and acting together in the shared interest of community and justice.” **It is to this point that I would like to focus on acting. Together. For young people.**

Recognizing that we come from different places, we all must take time to reflect upon and interpret what has happened — and continues to happen — around us. The School is creating space to gather, especially for those who need it, including Meetings for Worship and Affinity group gatherings. **Please see a full schedule of these events [HERE](#).** These events are optional. We understand that each individual processes and grieves differently.

Many also wonder how else we can move forward to understanding and healing, beyond meeting as a community. Our collective words and thoughts shared amongst each other may create a sense of solace for some, but for others it can feel temporary. Further action and work are needed for the School and this country to move forward. It will be painful and it will be difficult. We will have successes and we will see failures. But we will keep moving and we will show up.

Remembering that the mission of the School is to educate and care for children, I offer the below queries and actions for you to reflect upon. These are thoughts on steps that we can take, both individually and collectively, toward action.

## **What is within our (your) control?**

We have been reminded suddenly and harshly of the worst parts of humanity. Ugly truths of racism and social inequity continue to plague us. The list of causes and events that brought us here is long and packed with factors that are beyond our control in this moment. There are also factors that we can control and we must actively and thoughtfully differentiate between the two.

Change-making sometimes requires time and the involvement of many people who are organized for coordinated action. Change-making can also occur individually. In each instance we must strategize about what we can control, mobilize toward actionable steps, and find commonality to work across differences with the aim of social change. Our young people need it and they deserve it.

**Among our first actions should be to ask ourselves some seemingly basic questions, and answer them honestly.** What *can* I do today, tomorrow, and for the long term? What am I *willing* to do? What can I do that will be *most effective*? How can I productively channel all that I am feeling and care for myself, so that I *can* do?

We should also be careful as we grieve and reflect to take exclusive time to do so, *before acting*. Focusing on our anger toward others and uncontrollable things will be exhausting. It doesn't benefit us to become paralyzed in a state of angry inaction or virtue signaling. The need for our work is too urgent.

### **How can we increase understanding in order to change minds?**

It is incumbent on all of us to bring someone personally along with you in this work. Change happens one soul at a time. We are a society of humans. We are flawed and we make mistakes. However, humans thrive in our connection with others and in sharing our stories. It allows us to empathize, relate, and understand each other. We care for those to whom we are connected, and it is more difficult to hate or harm someone who you have come to understand. We can start with these steps:

1. Make a connection with someone who is different than you or who views the world differently.
2. Listen to their story and then, share yours.
3. Learn from each other and then encourage one another to act, no matter how small the action. You may even decide to act together.
4. Then, go on and find someone else to repeat the process with.
5. If you feel inclined to share a story of your journey with another person through these steps, please do so [HERE](#). I will collect them and share them as a reminder of our work and to hopefully encourage more.

The hate and injustice that we experience can happen quickly and acutely like a bull in a porcelain shop. The rubble left behind can only be repaired one piece at a time. **We can and will make change one soul at a time.**

### **What can we do individually and collectively today, tomorrow, and over the long term?**

As we ponder this for ourselves, remember our purpose is to shape and build the future for and of our young people.

Our Administrative and EJC Teams have been working to compile resources for our community and I have posted them all [HERE](#). This will be a living list that provides information on the ways that individuals can listen, learn, and act. It will also be posted to the Sidwell Friends Community page on Tuesday, as will all of the other links included in this letter.

We will be working through the summer to create a draft strategic plan for EJC work at Sidwell Friends that will in part *define* the work and include plans to create an environment that welcomes and engages more people. We will connect with the community again for feedback once that draft is complete. Our EJC teams continue to work tirelessly to create meaningful programming for our students both to educate and care for them and we will continue to improve these programs and evaluate their effectiveness. Our Administrative Team will continue to evaluate and improve policies, practices, and processes that allow Equity work to thrive as part of the fabric of this institution.

We have created this form to solicit your ideas as well. If you would like to share an actionable thought please do so [HERE](#) so that we can review, share, and act.

***Changing hearts and minds is work that takes time.***

Please remember that this is just a start. A start that has been started many times before; each time we are reminded of injustice and racism, each time one of these horrible acts is brought to our attention. Let us work together to move beyond this starting point and into sustainable and effective action.

What I've shared with you are my thoughts, and I hope that you will join me in this endeavor. However, I am just another human, there is no right answer. Let us roll up our sleeves, choose an action that works for us, and begin today.

With immense gratitude to this community,

Natalie M. Randolph  
Director of Equity, Justice & Community

***A list of shared links from above:***

- [Schedule of Events for Processing](#)
- [Share Your Journey of Understanding](#)
- [List of Community Resources to Dismantle Racism and Injustice](#)
- [Share Thoughts about Action Steps](#)

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