



Dear UWC-USA Community,

As I am sure you are aware, wherever you are across the globe, this is a painful moment in the United States of America. The images on our screens leave no doubt that the United States continues to struggle with racism and its heartbreaking effects. Systemic racism is a call to conscience for those who



benefit from it, and to compassion for those who suffer from it. Together we are called to do something about it. Violence and lawlessness distract us from our need to listen to those affected by the insidious injustices that demean and demoralize. Together we are called to stand against them. The destruction of property makes visible the scars of racial injustice that need healing. Together we are called to look at both, and to condone neither.

The UWC movement was founded during the Cold War with a simple, guiding insight: We can be better than this. Education can only be a force for peace because the possibility for change rests with each one of us -- in the daily commitments we make to be better and in the actions we take to do better. We are given the opportunity each and every day to see and to seek to understand the Other with openness, respect, and

compassion. We are given the opportunity each and every day to examine our own lives and to determine how we benefit from systemic injustice and how we perpetuate systemic racism. We are given the opportunity each and every day to open a dialogue with the Other, to listen more and talk less. We are given the opportunity each and every day to reject the polarization that numbs us to the simplest lessons, the ones we teach our children with such care, like treating others the way we would like to be treated.

I hesitated to say anything at all in the face of so much suffering. I have been overwhelmed by it, feeling something akin to the grief I felt at the death of my nephew, James, many years ago. But burying my nephew as my sister lay in a coma following a car accident that killed her 14-year-old son, I discovered something that I have rediscovered at UWC: We encounter our best selves when we learn the preciousness not only of our own children, but of the children of others.

I love to remind our students that we are a “microcosm of the world” here in tiny Montezuma, New Mexico. Amid this unrest in our host country, a country I love, I want all of our students to know that they make the world easy to love, too. But this past week has reminded us that there is hard work ahead of us if we are to fulfill our mission of peace and a sustainable future. Of course we all confront this lesson every day in our own global contexts -- in places of conflict that drag on as wars, in places where political reform would be a luxury for those who struggle to subsist or who are oppressed, in places where prosperity makes unwelcome the plights of those who would migrate to have something better.

It isn't about where or why the suffering is taking place; only about recognizing that we are called to stand up for any mother's child, for every mother's child, when we see them treated with anything less than the dignity they deserve. We are called to stand up for George Floyd and for so many others whose lives have been taken by injustice here in the United States and all over the world.

Wherever we are -- in our homes, in our workplaces, in the UWC movement -- we are being called to stand up for peace. And for the justice that makes it possible. We are also being called to listen, especially to the Other. It is, as ever, the only way forward.

In the spirit of love and hope,

Victoria