



Dear colleagues,

I am choosing to post this letter on this platform because I wish to speak to everyone in this community.

These last weeks of protest around the world has given me new hope. To see young people, angry and determined to demand change has brought me hope. To see that the world is finally paying attention to us, is bringing me hope. To see many colleagues reading and learning about racism and racial discrimination is giving me hope. Most importantly to hear my own students saying: "Ms, what's your story?" "I had no clue" or what can we really do as young people?" is truly bringing me hope.

For a second, I allow myself to dream that maybe I won't have to tell my son that he will have to work ten times harder than his white friends and colleagues to be taken seriously or seen as equal or/and recognised for his work. I allow myself to dream that I won't have to tell him that he will be treated differently because of the colour of his skin, that he will have to be close to perfection and still not be treated the same as his white friends. Today, I dare to dream of that precious moment, something many of you will never have to deal with and that is a great privilege that many people of colour don't have.

As a black woman living and working in Europe, I have the responsibility to do my job extremely well. I have the responsibility to conduct myself in an exemplary manner and sometimes I fail because I am human. But I feel like I cannot afford to fail or make mistakes that will make me look bad. Why? Because if I am not very good at my job, I will be remembered as "the black teacher" and if I do my job very well, I will be remembered as "an awesome teacher". And why is it important? Because I get to open a door for other people of colour just like my colleagues who were here before me opened the door for me. This is my reality!

Five years ago when I started here, I was so pleased and excited to see colleagues who look like me and more happy to see that the Lower school principal was a person of colour. Some of you might say that it's not enough, but believe me, it's huge. Because for 10 years, I have always been the only black person or the only person of colour, and I've been in 5 different international schools. I sometimes wonder how truly international schools are?

Coming here (to the International School of Luxembourg) and seeing my colleagues was for me a piece of victory.

Unfortunately, this is still An exceptional case in many international schools and that is why many teachers of colour, those who are lucky enough to work in schools like ours will hear during parent teacher conferences: "I am looking for Ms. N" who is me, not believing I am Ms. N. The awkward moment that follows can be interpreted in many ways. But the reality is that these white parents have never been given access to teachers who look like me and teach, inspire and care for their children. So implicit bias kicks in.

Let me tell you the danger of not having racial diversity in schools, especially in the most privileged schools. Five years ago, I had one of the best G9 classes anyone could wish for. At the end of the year, I asked everyone to say the highs and lows of the year. Then one student said: "My high of this year is that for the first time, I am not afraid of black people anymore" . This is when I knew how important my job was as an educator. My race is important, my voice is important and my actions are.

Anti-racism starts at home, but as educators, we have a very important role. We have the privilege to shape tomorrow's leaders into compassionate, principled leaders. As an educator, this is YOUR fight too. This is not a fight for black people anymore, this should be everyone's fight. The fight starts at home indeed, but we as educators have the moral obligation to talk about racism and racial discrimination in our classroom. If you

haven't started, this your moment. Do it for our children, do it for your students or simply do it because you care.

I will continue protesting because I fear it fades away and we go back to how things were before. Because today the world is paying attention. So my silent protest will be to wear my Black lives Matter T-shirt every Thursday starting today until the end of the year and every Monday next year. I remain committed to using my voice, I wish to maintain my hope and will continue to demand change. You are welcome to join me!

I am inspired by this poem from Ms. Dahman's advisee; "When I am silent, it stays the same, when I give my opinion, people become aware".

I will leave you with this quote from Martin Luther King:

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." MLK

Thank you for you time!

Your colleague,

Doline

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