

Black Lives Matter and Montessori Must Move Beyond the Peace Table¹

“Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

James Baldwin

The events of the past weeks, triggered by the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, have shone a spotlight on the ongoing racism, violence, and injustice that Black people in our country continue to live with and die from. Our Black parents and colleagues are exhausted, grieving, and traumatized.

We as a society have significant, collective work to do, and the Montessori community is no exception. As our BIPOC colleagues Britt Hawthorne, Amelia Allen Sherwood, Tiffany Jewell, Daisy Han and Trisha Moquino have already pointed out in [articles](#) and [workshops](#), many well-intentioned, White Montessori educators want to believe that grace and courtesy and the peace table are enough to combat racialized violence perpetrated in large and small ways against BIPOC individuals. But too often things like grace and courtesy are weaponized, used to silence the honest conversation and deep examination we need.

The policy work MPPI embarked on was inspired by a desire to preserve and protect authentic Montessori practice. But our community needs to ensure that authentic Montessori practice is not maintaining a status quo that benefits White children and families and harms Black children and families. If our schools are not actively engaging in anti-racist education and reflection, they are re-traumatizing Black students and parents and are enabling another generation of White children to grow into well-meaning adults who don't understand the role they play in propping up the very systems that perpetrate violence against Black people.

If you are unfamiliar with the term anti-racism, it means proactively working to dismantle individual bias and systemic racism. It involves conscientiousness and intention; almost everything Montessori educators do, from how we physically set up our classrooms to how we model behavior is done with great intention. *Almost*. It is past time that White Montessori educators apply that same intention to addressing racism within ourselves, our materials, our classrooms, and our schools. We prepare the environments in our classrooms and schools to enable children to reach their fullest potential. But Black students cannot reach their fullest potential when their teachers claim to be colorblind, when the accomplishments of their community are only lifted up during the month of February, when their libraries contain books with racist language and stereotypes. And our Black students cannot reach their fullest potential when the White people in the society we are preparing them for have not done the personal and societal work to dismantle racism and acknowledge the full humanity of Black people.

To our Black colleagues: we see you, we hear you, and we are so deeply sorry for the trauma you are experiencing from current events and that you have experienced by being marginalized within the Montessori community.

To our White colleagues: We recommend [Our Liberation Is Bound Together](#) recently published by Montessorians Dr. Nicole Evans, Faybra Hemphill, Daisy Han, and Katie Kitchens. In addition to resources referenced within that article, [here](#) is a list of resources we are passing on to help you move further along in your work. There are also numerous organizations and individuals, including [several with Montessori training](#), that you can hire to conduct anti-racism and anti-bias trainings for your staff, parents, and board or for your trainees if you run a teacher education program. In addition to resources on their website, [Montessori for Social Justice](#)'s annual conference provides a rich offering of workshops that can help you implement anti-racist practices in your classroom and [Embracing Equity](#) offers workshops and cohort based learning programs to “[cultivate] the mindsets and practices necessary to create an affirming, inclusive, and equitable educational ecosystem.”

Proactively working to dismantle racism means budgeting funds for and dedicating time to do this work within your school community. Both silence and words without action render us complicit in the destruction of Black lives and Black souls. We must not sit idly by, hoping that the peace table will transform society. We must not cloak our racism in calls for grace and courtesy. We must look in the mirror, dig deep, and confront the ways we participate in and benefit from a society that considers Black lives expendable.

¹ The phrase “Beyond the Peace Table” was the title of a workshop at an AMS conference conducted by Amelia Allen Sherwood Britt Hawthorne, and Tiffany Jewell.