



ASSOCIATION DES SECTIONS INTERNATIONALES AMERICAINES
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SECTIONS

New York, June 19, 2020

Dear American Sections Friends,

Barely emerging from the first wave of Covid-19 slumber, the streets and squares of the United States are swept by outrage. Across the world, millions of people are raising their voices in response to the killing of George Floyd. Not since Martin Luther King Jr. shared his Dream at the Lincoln Memorial, not since the Vietnam protests, have we seen a world-scale rallying cry comparable to that of Black Lives Matter.

Our American International Section schools have always claimed political and religious neutrality, based on the conviction that for dialogue to trump confrontation, our educational aims and the multicultural community of students and faculty demand that neutrality.

But racism, which in this context encompasses all forms of discrimination, is not a question of left or right; it's a matter of right and wrong.

The Franco-American dialogue on human rights has a rich history rooted in the Enlightenment: thirteen years after the American Declaration of Independence, the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* was drafted by Sieyès and Lafayette, in consultation with Thomas Jefferson.

And yet, on both sides, these universal claims were far from universal. More than two centuries later, despite the passage of the 13th, 14th, 15th and 19th Amendments, despite the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, systemic policy biases remain and the fundamental rights promised to all are denied to so many of America's Black citizens. And the promise of the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme* is similarly unfulfilled in France, where a fractured polity struggles with a post-colonial heritage, immigration challenges, and a vulnerable social compact threatened by unequal understanding of and access to the benefits of a hyper-connected world.

Black Lives Matter may be uniquely grounded in the history of African Americans, but its call reaches and stirs public opinion around the world. Sixty years ago, Martin Luther King Jr. helped America confront its own systemic oppression. Yet, as we are powerfully reminded, structural racism and poverty remain.

Of essence, hope is in the nature of a school. It is our job as educators to contribute to the fulfillment of promises of inclusion and equity. The American OIB curriculum is a fertile ground where the voices heard in History and Literature can shape our students' anti-racist literacy, empathy and agency. Borrowing Abraham Lincoln's words at Gettysburg, "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us..."

The AAMIS Board of Trustees and Executive Committee are united in this message.

With best wishes for your health and wellbeing,

Bernard Manuel
President