

BLACK

OUR NATION continues to reel in the wake of the death of **George Floyd** in May, which followed on the heels of the deaths of **Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery**, and hundreds of others. In cities and communities across our country, people are speaking out against racism and standing up for their Black friends, family members, colleagues, and fellow citizens. We are witnessing an outpouring of grief, pain, anger, and despair—the very real manifestations of what Langston Hughes called “a dream deferred.” ¶ Like organizations all over the United States, we have been complicit in regards to issues of systemic oppression. **We know that we have critical work to do.** We are committed to being an antiracist organization—one in which we all develop a comprehensive understanding of how racism and oppression operate—and to dismantling racism within Nueva and in our larger community.

MATTER

“ I can speak only from my experience as a non-Black educator, with the hope my identity cohort can take the time (but not too much time) to explore our own understandings of ourselves, to reckon with the shame and the guilt that arises, and the anger, and also the fear of doing it wrong, so we can stand up and, in service of our Black students and colleagues and community members, lend our voice, our strength, our support, our humility, to the promise that we will work behind them, alongside them, to make this beloved community, to ensure us all the right to breathe.”

LIZA RAYNAL
Middle School Division Head

“ We know that being in a school with diverse perspectives can increase the sophistication with which individuals approach ethical issues. Yet we also know that schools can perpetuate inequity as well, in many ways, both overtly and inadvertently. It is not enough to simply throw diverse groups of people together with the hope that the array of opinions and beliefs they hold will automatically lead to increased understanding and less marginalization. Such a transformation requires intention. ¶ As the Nueva community comes together to learn by doing and learn by caring at a time when so much of the world is finally waking up to the notion that Black lives matter, it’s important for us to structure our educational program and community in ways that actively and urgently combat racism and other forms of discrimination. Nueva takes pride in its ability to ambitiously design new modes of thinking and collaborating. Now is the time for Nueva to apply this same innovative spirit to anti-racist thought and action. What better way to transform individual lives and shape the future of society.”

LEE FERTIG, New Head of School

COMMUNITY
MEMBERS
WEIGH IN ON
THEIR HOPES
FOR NUEVA’S
GROWTH AS
AN ANTIRACIST
ORGANIZATION

PHOTOS BY
RACHEL FREEMAN,
JENNIFER PAULL,
AND WILLOW
TAYLOR C. Y. '21

BLACK LIVES MATTER



SPEAKING UP!

A powerful moment took place during the Class of 2020 graduation on Sunday, June 14 when student speaker **Anjali Ramanathan '20** shared this message:

"It is important to me that we take the time to honor the Black children that were murdered by police before they arrived at the momentous occasion we're celebrating today," she said. "They didn't get to have their names read at their high school graduations, so I'm going to spend a minute reading some of their names and ages at ours."

She then read off the names of 20 Black children, noting that two of these children should have been graduating with the Class of 2020, and a third who was killed just after his high school graduation.

"**Aiyana Stanley-Jones**, 7. Aiyana was born on July 20, 2002 — she would've been a senior this year.

Tamir Rice, 12. He was born on July 25, 2002. Tamir should have been graduating with us.

And **Michael Brown**, 18, who was murdered eight days after his high school graduation.

Black lives matter."

To read Anjali's complete speech, go to nuevaschool.org/voices



Thousands gathered in San Mateo on Wednesday, June 3 to peacefully march from San Mateo City Hall to the San Mateo Police Department in support of Black Lives Matter. Once the group reached its destination, people lay on the ground for three minutes of silence for the victims of police brutality.



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Making Sure No One is Left Behind

Nueva is not a place I imagined my career taking me when fantasizing about where I wanted to rekindle my calling to education. But I realized early on, when I used to frequent the campus as a Middle School substitute teacher, how impactful my presence was. While I was internally debating if applying to work at Nueva was the right choice for me, the Black students I had developed relationships with would express how excited they were to see me on campus and how that could simply impact their day. Those conversations pushed me to figure out how I could become a part of this community. While the reality of all the magnificent things that makes Nueva Nueva is obvious, there are still opportunities for us to be better and *do more!*

The word *Sankofa* (SANH-koh-fah)—which comes from the Akan tribe in Ghana—translates to, "It is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind." As educators, I feel like we play an essential role in the lives of our students, especially in making sure no one feels "left behind." The importance of instilling antiracism in children from a young age is something that hasn't been practiced in many educational institutions. While teaching children that bullying is wrong and that celebrating the diversity within our nation is valuable, why isn't it just as important that we be transparent in *really* planting an understanding of how racial differences can create negative ideologies? By not proactively and consistently acknowledging these injustices, what are we saying about the value of our Black students, Black faculty and staff, and Black community members?

Educators, doctors, and researchers constantly emphasize the importance of the first five years of a child's life. We hear jingles about going online to first5California.com and using

their resources to create curricula that enrich our kids, but could you imagine how much better things could be if we consistently addressed racism throughout a child's education, starting from a young age? Instead of finding excuses as to why we need to keep the cruelty of this world veiled, we should brainstorm and actually execute ways to frame conversations

and lessons to guide them in a direction that will give them the historical foundation and confidence to speak up against racial injustices. Through these conversations we not only open up a trusted space for children to navigate these really tough topics, but we also have the opportunity to challenge ourselves, and hopefully end the cycle of silence that perpetuates violence. For many, ignoring the injustices of our world is definitely the easier choice, but what about those of us who don't have the privilege of being able to ignore it?

Nueva is known for paving the way in so many aspects of education, from social-emotional learning to design thinking. Nueva can also be a maverick when it comes to social justice, equity, and inclusion. It is our duty as educators and an institution. That is the Nueva I'm hoping for!

—Rashida Blade, kindergarten associate teacher



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RASHIDA BLADE

TALK TO YOUR KIDS

Ahmaud Arbery. George Floyd.

Breonna Taylor. Three more unarmed black people murdered, victims of racist acts by civilians and law enforcement officials alike.

Many well-meaning white parents have asked how they can teach their children this is wrong. Many start with the belief that kids should be taught to be colorblind, and that everything would be OK if only everyone abided by the Golden Rule.

I'm not an expert, but I do have plenty of experience in talking to my own kids about race. That's why I know this line of thinking—teaching children that kindness will solve racism—is appealing, but wrong. Kindness did not end slavery, produce the gains of the civil rights movement, or result in the election of our first black president in 2008. Kindness will not fix the racial wealth gap in this country, nor is it a strategy for achieving gender and racial equity in hiring and compensation.

I'd love to see white parents with school-aged children talk to their kids about race by, first, starting to talk about their own realities. Start by acknowledging your own ignorance, and fully accept that you are afforded the luxury of this ignorance because of your skin color. Tell your kids that structural racism is not their fault, but they benefit from it in countless ways. Their movements through life—through neighborhoods and boardrooms, through interactions with store clerks and law enforcement—will be free of the burdens and tensions that black people must swallow and endure daily.

Even (perhaps especially) with younger children, have open, clear conversations about skin color. For example, you could say something like: "People have different color skin because people have different amounts of a chemical called melanin in their skin. The color of someone's skin tells you nothing about what kind of person they are. Unfortunately, people with darker skin are often treated badly because of their skin color. That is very wrong and unfair. We believe all people should be treated equally and with respect, and we want you to stand up for those values, too."

—Kareem Graham, Nueva parent '25
Excerpt from "White parents, talk to your kids about race," published on SFChronicle.com on June 9, 2020.





QUINCY ALSTON '20

Student Council Equity & Inclusion Representative

What's helpful to you as a student right now? As a student right now, what would be the most helpful is not speeches or statements but rather an actual commitment to foster spaces for Black students. While I am no longer a student, for my entire high school career I and most of the Black students were left to fend for ourselves without any support systems and had to reach out and create those spaces

ourselves. I would probably want to see an actual support/affinity program that the administration facilitates (not meaning they participate in) for Black teachers and Black students to engage with each other.

What conversations or support do you want from your peers, teachers, school?

I think that a real conversation needs to be had with the Black students to support them. I think the administration needs to do a lot more asking Black students and faculty what they need and actually giving them what they need. I think a great start would be to extend these questions to the Black students and faculty that are still part of Nueva because I have graduated. I also think that it is not at all fair for incoming Black students to be unaware of [struggles] that Nueva continues to have . . . I certainly wish I had known.

What do you hope will happen next? I hope that our administration recognizes that you don't have to look farther than the walls of the school to find racism. I hope that the administration decides to start addressing this racism with concrete actions . . . I hope the administration opts to convey how serious we are about antiracism through punishments because things like suspension can be reconciliatory . . . I hope in the future the administration does not [place the burden on] Black students to disclose information about racist incidents.

What are important conversations we need to be having right now? I actually think Nueva has a lot of conversations. I think the problem is [it doesn't feel like anything is being] done about these conversations. Talking is really easy but for some reason we believe that antiracism is as simple as just having a bunch of conversations. We put the entire burden of social justice on one person and when of course that doesn't fix the problems we throw our hands up . . . I think a great place to start might be not pretending like our problems don't exist . . . Antiracism is not some sort of half commitment you can make by just having conversations. It is definitely not easy and it means making hard decisions to stand up for the safety of Black kids instead of always thinking about how we can save a white kid's future from their own racism . . . [To be an antiracist organization, you can't] both consistently prioritize the education and futures of racist students and call yourself antiracist.

Lastly, get rid of the IQ test. The test is proven to be subjective and really isn't measuring the abstract idea that is intelligence or giftedness. The way we define giftedness on our website is so wildly abstract and can really be applied to most children. A test that measures how fast you can arrange blocks and say strings of words backwards measures exactly how fast you can arrange blocks, not one's proximity to any of these conditions.

✦ Freshmen Drew S. and Eliza S. and Upper School teacher Jo Newman are joined by their families and thousands of others on June 3 for San Mateo's peaceful protest and march.



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QUINCY ALSTON



EVERY. SINGLE. DAY.

Today, under the coronavirus shelter-at-home guidelines, I decided to pick a few of the gardenias growing in my front yard of 25 years. The gardenias are along the perimeter of the yard, so I was picking them from the sidewalk. I realized, as a white couple approached my house along the same sidewalk, that my actions, as a Black person, could be interpreted as stealing the gardenias. I felt an immediate urge to demonstrate that I lived in the house. Without any provocation from the passersby, the very fact that I had that thought is troublesome, learned, and an example of the day-to-day African American experience.

Experiences like these happen to African American students, to African American teachers, and to African American parents in our carefully curated nest called Nueva. The microaggressions are so ingrained that perpetrators don't even know when they happen. And Black people either don't want to make a scene for fear of being labeled "trouble," "sensitive," "angry" or are too tired to yet again start a lengthy discussion about something those with privilege cannot comprehend in just a few minutes. Imagine living with that kind of tension. Every. Single. Day. I understand if that seems unbelievable. It seems that way because African Americans have had centuries to learn behaviors that hide this pain, terror, and anguish in order to survive. We are really good at it, to the detriment of our health; many of our health issues are stress-related chronic illnesses. If we aren't killed by hate, we are killed by the fear of hate.

—Hillary Freeman, 5th–12th grade dean of student life

Excerpted from "Every. Single. Day." To read the full article, go to nuevaschool.org/voices

Nueva Deepens Our Commitment to Counter Implicit Bias

In February, I was part of a small team of Nueva representatives who attended Pollyanna, an anti-bias conference for schools that teach grades pre-kindergarten through eighth. Aimed at promoting community-wide growth, the day centered on three experiences: a keynote focused on offering a wealth of research and practical strategies for tackling implicit bias; an opportunity to work with and learn from other Bay Area school members; and time reflecting on one's own community and planning for the future.

Jerry Kang, professor of law at the UCLA School of Law, kicked off the morning with an engaging message about how to counter implicit bias. He offered everyone in attendance five alliterative key points to capture his thinking:

Deflate: Be humble. Have the awareness that we all have implicit bias and that it takes effort to change. It is natural to engage in what he described as "moral credentialing," thinking that having the knowledge is curative and then assuming our personal discretion is more reliable.

De-bias: Countering bias involves societal change, and yet, in our classrooms, we have some particular power to reinforce one of Kang's key points: you are what you see. What we see defines what it means to be normal. We can influence what our students see as the norm. We can present diverse perspectives and lived experiences, and actively break down stereotypes and misconceptions. We have the ability to share mirrors of our students as well as windows into other perspectives, cultures, and identities.

Decouple: Kang raised the importance of creating systems that constrain personal discretion. This can involve building diverse teams that bring diverse perspectives, embracing structures and protocols that counter group-think, and seeking to identify assumptions and then actively working to disprove rather than confirm them.

Design: Kang shared that it is important to consider how bias might affect who we support and in what ways. He asked us to identify where we communicate high expectations and for whom. He recommended emphasizing malleability and resisting tracking, as well as sponsoring or mentoring others outside of our comfort zones.

Data: Kang recommended gathering "little data" by doing something as simple as listing the last five people we had lunch or dinner with and then looking for patterns. We can also apply big data, and gather broader information to analyze our practices; for example, what language do we use in talking with different genders, and how might bias affect discipline or who participates in class? Data collection is also key to measuring our own changes in behavior.

Over the afternoon, our school team reflected on Kang's presentation, our cohort meetings with members in similar roles at other schools, and our experiences within our Nueva community. In this space, our parents and students shared personal stories of triumph, disappointment, strength, challenge, and support. Faculty, administrators, and trustees shared their efforts to shape policy, culture, and practice. Collectively, we highlighted areas for continued work tied to race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic diversity. We celebrated that Nueva is further along than many schools and recognized the need for important ongoing work and growth.

Perhaps one of the biggest takeaways from the day was the importance of being open and honest in this journey and getting comfortable with being uncomfortable in order to promote learning and growth. As one Nueva participant summarized, "When you open up and share something [personal], you can [then] connect with someone else and start to build bridges. Then we can understand, 'It's not okay to treat me differently because of the assumptions you have about me.'"

This echoed Jerry Kang's keynote message, which was hopeful even as he asked us to recognize both that implicit bias is part of the human condition and that it has substantial and sometimes frightening consequences. He reminded us that "there is great power in radical honesty about our own limitations." Embracing this insight, we can be honest about where we can still grow, develop policies and practices to further promote equity and inclusion, and build bridges that deepen our sense of community.

—Taryn Grogan, director of admissions



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Embracing this insight, we can be honest about where we can still grow, develop policies and practices to further promote equity and inclusion, and build bridges that deepen our sense of community."

TARYN GROGAN echoing and expanding on the message of keynote speaker Jerry Kang

BLACK LIVES MATTER

“ At Nueva, our charge is to help our students discover, pursue, and make real their dreams. We are beholden, as educators, to build a community where all can thrive. We cannot, then, stand by as the long-deferred dream of equality continues to be denied. This is the time to uphold all that we hold dear as individuals and a community. This is the time for both introspection and action, compassion and clarity, courage and conviction. This is the time that we model for our children, our community, and the nation at large what it means to engage in the soul-searching work of racial healing, to truly be a beloved community, and to embrace being brave and civil and kind and bold in our envisioning of a world inclusive of all of us.

ALEGRIA BARCAY
Equity & Social Justice Director

As educators, we have a powerful role in the crucial, long-term work of reckoning with our country's painful legacy, recognizing our own biases, and actively combating racism and oppression. Working with young children, we have the power to counter the narratives that have dominated the past. We have the power to help our children develop positive racial identities, to build early awareness of how to disrupt bias and recognize and reject systems of oppression, and inspire a strong commitment to collective responsibility and care. This must be a focus for our work together so we can help our students build a different future. ”

MEGAN TERRA
Lower School Division Head



LEARN BY DOING LEARN BY CARING.

Nueva's motto loops over and over in my mind because of the need for the world to do something. Nueva's response to the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter Movement was appropriate yet, as a Black man in the United States, felt inadequate. White institutions, while well meaning, too often do not take the step forward BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) yearn for and so direly need. They look to BIPOC to speak up, lead conversations, and be champions of diversity when it's emotionally and physically detrimental. Learn by doing. What, exactly, are we doing? Don't misunderstand, Nueva is one of the best educational institutions in the world. Yes, the world. Why? Simple. Learn by doing, learn by caring. This phrase points to the true measure of an educational institution. To what extent are students critical about the world around them and feel empowered to enact positive change? When applying this measure specifically with the lens of social (in)justice, Nueva fails. Time and time again. Why? Simple. Lack of institutional change. We easily point out flaws in a science experiment, rhetoric, and joyfully comment on Dickens' style and prose, but fail our students in helping them see institutional racism and empower them to apply their learning to create a future void of racist institutions. Moving forward, Nueva's obligation as an educational institution is to enable, enact, and empower. Enable BIPOC community members to equitably enter our institution and promise their safety and uplift their voices. Enact mandatory antiracist hiring practices, professional development, and curriculum design. Empower students to enact positive change in the world and enable my future Black child to breathe without fear. Nueva owes this to me. And every other BIPOC community member past, present, and future.

—Davion Fleming, associate director of admissions and 9th-grade co-dean



WE SEE YOU. WE HEAR YOU. AND WE ARE TAKING ACTION.

At the start of June, the Nueva Board of Trustees and the school's leadership team convened a task force to deepen our commitment to antiracism, equity, and inclusion. Led by trustees Jody Sievers and Puja Kaul—and comprised of trustees, faculty, staff, parents, and students—this task force will constructively and ambitiously address manifestations of racism and marginalization within the Nueva community. The task force will focus on identified areas of growth in this domain through active listening and goal setting in conjunction with other Nuevans. By raising awareness, building trust, and ensuring collective accountability, the aim is to elevate Nueva to become a significantly more inclusive community.