

HOTCHKISS

Dear Members of the Hotchkiss Community,

During the summer and fall of 2020, across this country and around the world we witnessed the beginnings of change. As a rising tide of individual voices became unified in its refusal to accept anti-Black racism, institutions of all kinds began to engage in their own self-reckoning, focusing on the systems, practices, and ways of being that have allowed racism and prejudice to endure.

In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave a speech at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., titled Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution. In this speech, he spoke of Rip Van Winkle, a character invented by Washington Irving, who went up a mountain and slept for 20 years. As Dr. King described, when Van Winkle walked up the mountain, he passed a sign featuring the picture of King George III. When he walked down the mountain again, it was to pass a picture of George Washington. In the 20 years of Van Winkle's slumber, a revolution had taken place.

"One of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change, and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses, that the new situation demands," Dr. King explained. "They end up sleeping through a revolution."

We must ask ourselves whether the time in which our society finds itself today is a brief moment of social discord, or if it is in fact a movement toward fundamental change. In years to come, as we tell the story of this period, we will be asked, what did we do when it was our time? Did we wake up and heed the cries of those who have been mistreated, and did we answer them with change?

Later in the speech that day in 1968, Dr. King famously said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." It does not bend on its own. The arc bends toward justice because individuals and communities bend it.

The work to vanquish racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, and bigotry of all kinds from this community is ongoing. The finish line we must cross is that of justice and belonging for all.

Our mission statement opens with the words, "The Hotchkiss School seeks to inspire a diverse range of students who are committed to the betterment of self and society." We cannot claim to have lived up to that mission unless we take action to ensure that every student in our care learns and grows in a community that is fair and equitable. Such a community benefits every one of its members.

As we focus on the experience of Black students, we take meaningful strides in what will be a marathon, not a sprint. We must earn every mile. But it is a journey that will carry The Hotchkiss School closer to justice for every member of the community.

We hope you will join us.

Sincerely yours,

Rebecca van der Bogert Co-chair,
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Board of Trustees

Annika Lescot '06
Co-chair, DEI committee, Board of
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Co-President of the Board of Trustees

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