A Letter to our Parents of Youth Ministries Programming at Cameron House

Dear Families,

Whenever violence or harm happens to anyone in a community— it affects families, friends, neighbors, too —unexpected emotions can come out. We never know what it is that strikes a chord in us, that moves our heart to ache, that angers us when the people we love are threatened. As we work for the change that cannot come soon enough, the Youth Ministries (YM) team wanted to share with you some of the thoughts and deep feelings that we’ve been experiencing since the murder of George Floyd by four police officers on May 25th. The protests that have erupted and the young voices who have been leading at the forefront of these movements have inspired our team to explore and define what it means to stand in solidarity with Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC). We want to follow their lead in modeling to the rest of the city what it truly means to chant, act, and advocate for Black Lives Matter.

We wonder how you, your children, and loved ones are engaging in conversation about these matters. Are you also thinking about these things and having conversations with one another? What kind of support and resources do you need?

As the YM Team looks at Fall programming, we are discussing ways to empower and equip our youth with the tools to participate in these difficult, but necessary, conversations. We wanted to share with you some of the reflections and questions that we’re starting to ask each other:

- How do we collaborate and foster relationships with our Black sisters and brothers in San Francisco?
- How do we build upon inclusive practices and anti-racism curriculum in our BAP and Friday Night Club programs?
- How do we advocate for school communities to shift from police intervention solutions and break the cycle of school-to-prison pipelines?
- How do we raise awareness and share resources for families to have these conversations with their youth?
- How do we address anti-Blackness, colorism, and white supremacy within our own Asian-American youth communities?
- How do we help build brave spaces where people can feel empowered to walk this un-learning journey - together?

We know our work begins first with educating ourselves. Our team members share some of their ideas for themselves:

- sharing online resources and social media platforms
- talking with family and friends
- reading anti-racist literature
- understanding Asian and Black solidarity movements
- participating in culturally-relevant professional development for youth workers
Education and conversations are important good first steps, but we want to do more. The team wants to focus on actionable steps at the same time to commit to a broader movement. Some of our initial ideas include:

- expanded culturally-relevant training for our frontline youth staff
- creating spaces in our youth programs to provide these conversations and shared resources
- integrating anti-racist curriculum into our afterschool enrichments
- inviting and giving platforms for Black and Brown voices in our community
- engaging Black and Brown families that also live in Chinatown
- exploring how these racially-inclusive projects can expand to include both youth and adult participants, volunteers and staff

As the mission of Cameron House’s Youth Ministries has evolved over the decades to address the changing needs of our community, we are once again called to respond, and we invite you to partner and walk with us as we learn and journey together.

_In Community,_

_Youth Ministries Team_

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