

Black History is NOT an Option:
MEPI Statement on Peace and Social Justice

The Montessori Method rests on a foundation of respect—an expression of the philosophy about the nature of the child and of the role of the child as instrumental in the effort to further the cause of peace around the world. “True peace suggests the triumph of justice and love among men; it reveals the existence of a better world wherein harmony reigns,” states Dr. Montessori. Montessori children learn to respect themselves, others, and their environment by observing the adults in their lives who purposefully practice these attributes. Our classrooms are full of indicators of the importance of respect from the peace corner to the portraits of artist of the month; our ceremonies highlight it with celebrations of life to continent studies and recognizing the basic needs of all human beings. For as theologian Myron R. Chartier said, “There is something within the human spirit that cries for and demands to be treated with basic fairness and justice. When such is violated, peace is undermined. Seeking justice for others is a way to peace.”

While numerous external interests seek to promote agendas contrary to the goals of Montessori and true peace and justice, our leaders in classrooms, teacher education programs, schools, and professional societies have a solemn responsibility to identify those interests and thwart them. Recently in Utah a school leader failed to protect his teachers and children from one such influence and has expressed regret for it. We are fully aware that such instances may not be limited to this one incident but are likely present in many of our schools through this country and beyond. As such, we hope that these recent incidents invite our membership and indeed all members of our society to review themselves for implicit bias and to pursue concrete and constructive ways to “seek justice for others” and to hold up the accomplishments and illustrious history of all members of our country and around the world. As noted by our fellow Montessorians, we heartily agree that “Black history is American history” and that “World history is Black history.”

The contributions of people of color everywhere must be recognized, celebrated, and honored for their vast achievements in the foundation and progress within our own country and indeed in the advancement of human civilization throughout time and among all countries and cultures. As stewards of our children’s future, we must recognize our responsibility to teach our children an entire history, including its illustrious successes and its dismal failures, its pinnacles of compassion and its epochs of unfairness and injustice toward many. This is a moment to ask ourselves, what more can, and should we be doing? How can we make sure that we educate for equity, justice, and true peace?

This is a teachable moment for us all. While we cannot know the details of the event, we want all Montessorians in positions of responsibility to know that our colleagues around the world stand by resolutely to help. Just as Dr. Montessori saw the child as the key to developing a peaceful global society, so the Montessori community is admirably suited to pursuing her vision. MEPI intends to do its part. Montessori leaders will receive rapid assistance from the

MEPI office to help resolve the thorny issues that threaten us. This promise applies not only to anti-bias anti-racism issues but in all aspects where false witness threatens a clear reality. We are committed to a thorough examination of how we design curriculum for teachers and students, for the school, and for teacher professional training and development. We encourage our parents to join us in partnership as we endeavor to “speak truth to power” and to clear and committed “truth telling” as we move forward in the important work of advancing the promise of true peace and justice for all.