

# The Fieldston News

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## Special Edition: Race at Fieldston

### Kim Emile '88 Reflection

"[People] may be said to resemble not the bricks of which a house is built, but the pieces of a picture puzzle, each differing in shape, but matching the rest, and thus bringing out the picture."

- Felix Adler

I am a direct beneficiary of the administrative building takeover at Fieldston in March of 1970. At that time in our history many African-American and Latino students, along with their allies, called for more faculty of color, students of color and a more inclusive curriculum. When I started kindergarten in at Fieldston Lower in 1975 my class was extremely diverse and truly represented the landscape of New York City at the time.

I had a wonderful experience at Fieldston. I remember walking the halls of Lower with confidence and pride while wearing my favorite bell bottom jeans covered with many patches and my beaded cornrows that made music when I moved. I remember running up the hill every morning with the delightful anticipation of what that day would bring. I remember feeling loved and valued by my teachers and principal

who always greeted me with smiles and words of affirmation. I remember a very old man from the Ethical Culture Society with pale white skin and hair the color of snow who walked the halls of Fieldston Lower and called everyone by name. I had the privilege of being taught ethics by Algernon Black, the leader of the Ethical Culture Society at the time. I felt so empowered here as a young child. Even as a little girl, I knew that if I were to ever have children I wanted them to go to Fieldston.

The days that Arielle '20 and Austin '21 were accepted to pre-kindergarten at Fieldston Lower I count as two of the happiest in my life. While they were in the Lower School, I enjoyed giving tours to prospective parents and students. It gave me the platform to talk about how much I truly loved our institution and an opportunity to walk the halls of the Lower School again.

Last year in the sixth grade, Austin had the incredible opportunity to participate in the first year of the Africans in the Diaspora club. He was so excited and described it as a "game-changer" in his young life. He spent several months studying African history after school

on Mondays with his teacher Ms. Gibba who developed the program. During spring break last year he went to Ghana with the group and had the opportunity to go to Nzul-ezu, a village built on stilts in the middle of water that was representative of the way some West African people resisted the slave raiders. He also visited the Cape Coast and Elmina castles where he retraced the footsteps of his ancestors who were about to be forcibly removed from their homeland and brutally enslaved in America for several hundred years. Austin enjoyed learning about his history at the Du Bois Center for Pan Africanism. However, his favorite part of the trip was spending time in wood crafting village of Ahwiaa and the open markets of Accra where he bartered for souvenirs. Although the youngest member of the group, he was acknowledged by his peers as the best and most skillful negotiator. The quiet intellectual had become one of the loudest voices. It was a powerful experience and one that will undoubtedly shape his future. As an alumna, I was proud that the administration supported this very important new initiative.

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### President Address

By BETH AWANO '17 AND AZEEZ ADEYEMI '17

The series of events that transpired Thursday caused many people in our community to feel anger and grief. But from this moment of difficulty, students rose up and took the necessary first steps towards addressing the long standing systemic racial issues within our community. Their actions provided students and teachers of color with the chance to share their stories. And in response, as a community, we listened.

We want to thank the organizers of the walk-out for their exemplary determination and initiative, and Mr. Cairo and the administration for enabling students to voice their grievances.

Moving forward, as next year's co-presidents, we hope to foster a more aware and considerate community, where the whole student body, no matter race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, political view, or sexual orientation, has a voice that is heard.

In order to do so, we plan to host more frequent roundtables so that no one feels as though they are, or need to be, censored. Each person offers a unique and essential perspective, and when some are silenced, we lose a key feature of what makes Fieldston the inclusive place it strives to be.

As the demands of the walk out highlighted, systemic injustice starts with the courses we take, the books we read, the discussions we have, and the people who teach. All too often, our curriculum dictates that we learn about the powers of Europe, but not of Asia, Africa or the Middle East. All too often, our curriculum dictates that we read books by Shakespeare and Sophocles but not books by Chinua Achebe or Alexander Chee. It is time that our curriculum includes the narratives of all people. This need further

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Dr. Paulianda Jones addresses the community during in-school walkout.

PHOTO BY TALIA MARKOWITZ

# Ravyn Hounsell '17

Felix Adler once said that The ideal of [our] school is not the adaptation of the individual to the existing social environment [but] to develop individuals who are competent to change their environment to greater conformity with moral ideals." As students of the Ethical Culture Fieldston School, it is our responsibility to create a community in which all members not only feel comfortable, but feel wanted and needed. In many instances, es-

pecially for students of color, this is simply not the sentiment felt. We represent a mere fraction of our school's population (not to mention the fact that the term "people of color" accounts for any ethnicity that isn't considered white... of which there are many). Often times it's lonely being the only brown or black face in a class. Sometimes it even feels dangerous. Being of color means that a lot of the discussions that are held in Ethics, English, and History classes aren't simply discussions— they represent aspects of our identity that stick with us even when school is over. It isn't easy to give your own perspective and expect full respect and understanding when you are the only brown or black face in a class full of whites.

# Ciara Cury '17

As a hispanic woman in this community I was unsure where I fit in. I knew I was of color but I didn't know that hispanic wasn't a race. Up until very recently, I was unaware that my identity could be intersectional and that I was more than just one thing. This was largely due to the fact that throughout my career at Fieldston, discussions about race were lacking. Black meant African American and thus, I felt excluded from calling myself black. I felt like I didn't belong to any race and I still have trouble claiming any racial identity. During high school, I took it upon myself to finally investigate and understand my racial background. Fieldston was of no help in this aspect of my education. Throughout the years, I found myself reading about histories that did not represent my identity. Not once in my time at Fieldston have I had an in-depth learning experience about the history of either Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic, and I have had to deal with this. I have had to learn about the history of Italy, France, and the beginning of the United States. There is no doubt that it is important to have a well rounded historical education, but I can say with certainty that my historical education up until 10th grade at Fieldston has lacked diversity. The English department is only slightly better in this respect. Almost all of the texts we've read are written by white authors. I understand the importance of reading "classic" novels, but to be completely honest, these books have not enriched my learning experience. To this day, I can't say that I've enjoyed more than 3 of these books. It is incredibly hard to feel so underrepresented in the curriculum you are taught your entire life. That's why spaces like Randy's office and organizations such as Bridge to Bridge are necessities. In a predominantly white institution, it is rare that I see another hispanic person in my classes. I look around and see 15 white faces and maybe 3 or 4 people of color. There is only one other person in my whole grade whose racial background is nearly (not fully) identical to mine. This is very isolating. There are so many customs and practices that, as someone who doesn't identify as Jewish, I can't relate to. The food I eat is seen as ethnic and the things that seem so normal to me, are foreign to many of my classmates.

There is also a class divide that is hard to avoid at Fieldston, as many students who attend this institution have substantial amounts of money. My peers have many experiences I can not relate to because I just do not have the money to access the countries and activities that they can. I still feel hesitant to tell people where I live.

**"It is incredibly hard to feel so underrepresented in the curriculum you are taught your entire life."**

While in some regards Fieldston is a respectable institution, it has failed in teaching us how to be truly accepting and kind to one another. It can feel very intimidating to be a woman of color in a community such as Fieldston where you look around and see so few people who look like you and identify in similar ways as you. This feeling fosters a sense of shame in one's identity and a need to fit in by rejecting large parts of our identities. Being reminded constantly that your identity does not matter and being silenced because "not everything is about race," is taxing. You don't want to be seen as "that girl," but at the same time you want to have a voice in your community. I have found myself being disrespected throughout my career at this school and whenever I defend myself, I am constantly told I should calm down, use a nicer tone, and stop being so angry. I have felt silenced because I feel expendable in this community. I am a woman of color on financial aid. My contract can easily be repealed if I do something to upset those in charge of this school. And up until the protest we staged, I never truly felt comfortable speaking up in our community because I feared backlash and judgement from my peers and the faculty. In that moment, I felt that what I had to say truly mattered to my peers and I felt like I truly belonged in the Fieldston community. I hope that this feeling continues for the year that I have left in this institution.



Ciara Cury '17 beginning the protest on the quad.

PHOTO BY THEO MATZKA

# Roundtable in Review

By: TYLER FRIEDMAN

Tuesday's round table was one of many discussions that arose from Thursday's watermelon incident. Students and faculty discussed possible ways the Fieldston community can address the concerns brought up during Friday's walk-out in order to make our school a more accepting place. Matthew Jalazo (V) proposed an idea to abridge certain assemblies and use that extra time as well as funny time to break into small groups to discuss the issue raised at that assembly. This would help foster important conversations based on information disseminated during a given assembly. Another next step that was discussed at the round table was possible curriculum changes. Many teachers have been discuss-

ing the importance of incorporating a wider array of voices into their syllabi. When asked about necessary next steps, Mariama Richards stated, "we need to create a pre-K through twelve scope and sequence of our curriculum. After looking at our curriculum, we need to identify the areas of growth and change." These changes should not be limited to the high school. Many educators at Fieldston are examining how we can alter the syllabi of Ethical and Fieldston Lower to begin race discussions at an earlier age.

The attendees of this round table were both students of color and white. Some, however, were surprised by how few white students

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# On Our Standing and Sitting Together

BY DR. ALWIN JONES

I am an artist/poet. I am a husband. I am a father. I am a teacher. I am a mentor. I am a son. Friend. Activist. Educator. Motivational speaker. Cheerleader. High-fiver. Dapper. I believe in the head nod and the what's up ma dude. What's good G? The what's going on? Hello? Como estas? Sak passe? How are you? I am the person who says, look up, ain't no freedom on the ground.

I am a storyteller. A comedian. I care. I feel. I believe that what I do, teaching, is what I was put here to do. I know that it is difficult work. It requires flexibility. It requires open-mindedness. I believe that the energy that I project can not only help me to connect, but also give energy to students who share it or sometimes need it, or return it ten-fold.

**“I believe that what I do, teaching, is what I was put here to do.”**

I love the humor of my colleagues and my students. I love the resiliency of my students who, when they realize all of these parts about me, allow me to see their vulnerabilities as they realize and embrace being “works in progress” to quote Jessica Care Moore.

I am usually in tune with the way my body feels and what it needs. I know I need joy. I need laughter. I need to ask questions. I need those fist bumps. I need my students. I need my books and the words of authors who remind me that “I am not the son of sha clack clack / I am before that / before before.” I also need to know that what I am doing matters. I need to know and understand and embrace the fact that I am serving young people by helping them unlock their best selves.

However, I am Dr. Jones. I am Guyanese. I am a black man who learned most of his lessons in this world from women. Some white. Some Asian, East and South. Some Latina. But most of them Black women.

I stood up and continue to stand because of all the things I am, and for and because of all of the “people who led to [the] play” that is me to borrow from Adrienne Kennedy's title. I stand because of the long

Black struggle that I am a part of, that long black struggle which has led to the long black songs we have sung and stories of courage that we have spun to clothe our children in Joseph-like robes so that they may not be the dreaded shrouds.

It is difficult work.

I first understood and embraced teaching as difficult work in 2002-2003. I was having a really trying but rewarding time in the classroom. I was teaching 9th grade English Language Arts and Creative Writing at my alma mater, Boys and Girls HS, in Brooklyn, NY. A friend had attended a performance by Sarah Jones at Tufts and had Jones dedicate a chapbook to me, a young teacher months out of college. Jones wrote, “Thank you for doing the difficult work.”

I began my statement in solidarity with the student body's Friday protest with those words. Those words first said to me by Jones continue to inform how I approach my preps for teaching, my course planning, my interactions with students outside of the classroom and my teaching in it. Teaching is the difficult work. On Friday last week, it was particularly difficult. The difficult work meant asking myself how I failed my students, and how and where we failed as an institution. The difficult work meant standing and listening to the students on the quad and engaging with the seniors in the hallways and doorways, as we all processed and reflected. The

difficult work remains feeling and embracing and carrying the stories we were all blessed to hear on the quad.

The Fieldston I saw in the last two days of last week and this week is the Fieldston that I love.

**“The difficult work meant asking myself how I failed my students, and how and where we failed as an institution.”**

I want to say thank you to the brave students who spoke their truths on Friday. Those students who reminded us that we have work to do. Those students who were and are getting in formation. Those students who were getting information. Thank you to the students from sixth grade to form VI who shared their truths, unapologetically. Thanks for the thoughtful apology that we received.

We witnessed the hundreds of students and faculty members and family and staff sitting for some six hours to hear these testimonies represent the Fieldston of which I am proud to be a part. The Fieldston that is possible. The Fieldston that is necessary. The Fieldston I think we will be if we embrace doing the

difficult and messy and necessary work.

I thank the students for the gift that they gave us--the opportunity to truly embody the name of our school and its mission. I want to thank all the students who reminded us that in the stories that we teach them, it is the young who always stood to bring forth the world they were still able to imagine before time dampened the wicks of their optimism. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. They reminded us teachers and parents and staff that we were once the young who stood up or were able to stand up because the young people before us stood up.

Thank you for waking us up from our slumbers.

We may have dozed off at the wheel but you grabbed it before we crashed.

Thus in your names and those who came before you and those who are to come, I call on Saul Williams' “Co-dead Language”:

“We enlist every instrument: acoustic, electronic.

Every so-called race, gender, and sexual preference.

Every per-son as beings of sound To acknowledge their responsibility To uplift the consciousness of the entire... world.”

In the spirit of the motto of my Guyanese high school alma mater, President's College, Fieldston, WE CAN; Fieldston, WE MUST; Fieldston, WE WILL.



Dr. Alwin Jones addresses the ECFS community during Friday's protest on the quad.

PHOTO BY THEO MATZA

## Jared Bowser '16

An act of racial terror was committed at our school. When Marie Johnson Mrkonjic walked into her office to find watermelons sitting on her desk, she was terrorized. Above all, we should be focusing on making Marie feel comfortable returning to Fieldston without feeling persecuted.

After that comfort is established, this appalling act of racism should be used to point out the many flaws within Fieldston that allowed this to happen. At Fieldston, there is a lack of diversity within the History and English curricula, and a need for more faculty of color in all departments. Fieldston is a school that tends to be up in arms about an issue one day, but over it the next day. These flaws truly matter and need to be discussed. Sadly, there are members of the senior class that don't see these issues as the principal topics of discussion. Many view their own reputations as more pressing than Fieldston's clear defects. Why are we so focused on our image, while so many people feel hurt? This attitude will only make us look worse. If we continue down this self-centered path, our legacy will not be of a group of students that have demanded change in many parts of Fieldston. Instead, it will be that of a group of students who, when faced with a racist act, made excuses rather than encouraged change.

**“Why are we so focused on our image, while so many people feel hurt?”**

I refuse for this to be our legacy. Students in our grade championed issues of gender and made sure that Fieldston could correctly educate its students on the many complexities of this topic. Students in our grade refused to uphold the sexist culture surrounding fests and began discussions regarding this toxic culture at Fieldston. Sometimes not all of our attempts yielded the results we wanted, but we tried with all of our strength to make positive change at Fieldston with each endeavor. We must not let our personal reputations take priority when people are worried about their safety at our school. So what if the grades below us don't look at us in the same way anymore?

So what if some people feel like we shouldn't graduate? So what if our grade never repairs our legacy? Students are rightfully angry. They are tired of being treated like second-class citizens in a school they call their own. They are tired of the lack of education surrounding their own stories. If they can make meaningful change at the expense of our class' reputation, that should be a trade we happily accept. We must stop thinking of ourselves. That mindset is impeding our grade from helping to bring real change to Fieldston. Some feel that the administration's response to this act of racial persecution was hasty and overstated the senior class' involvement in the prank. These feelings are valid and understandable, however, I ask that we look beyond ourselves and instead look at the bigger picture. This was an act of terrorism on Marie's mind, body and space. What happened when Mr. Cairo and the faculty got up on stage does not matter. What matters is Marie's safety at Fieldston and the change so many students want to make. The values of Felix Adler would not allow for a selfish need to uphold personal reputation over the necessity to make meaningful change at Fieldston.

## Ocean Gao '15

I'm enormously proud not only of the students who organized Fieldston's walk-out, but also of everyone who shared an experience that day. Going up to speak in front of a crowd is nerve-racking, but it is particularly difficult when you are sharing something personal. It is even harder to do in an institution where you are constantly told that you don't matter.

In the United States, one type of racism that Asian Americans face is the notion that we are “perpetually foreign.” Throughout my years at Fieldston, I continually wondered if my peers embodied this same way of thinking, making me feel as if I could never belong. I felt that I was constantly fighting to be heard, only to be shot down each time. When boys from my grade mocked a shirt that I wore for pep rally, one that criticized Fieldston as an institution, the subliminal message was that my experience here did not matter. When a figure of authority told me that my idea for the fashion show was “only because I [wanted] attention,” the message was that my idea did not matter. When I was rejected from being a part of the cabinet (which wound up being 16/17 white students), rejected from being a part of Fieldston's disciplinary

committee, and rejected from being the speaker of my graduating class, the message was that the student body did not want me to represent them.

That being said, I can only hope peoples' stories were listened to and were reacted to with compassion, though it will take more than mere awareness to make students with marginalized identities feel that they belong. I feel that there's something about Fieldston as an institution that fosters a cold, performative environment where everything is a battle for social capital. Seeing the attendance for the walk-out on Friday, however, gave me hope. While I'm really glad that the walk-out happened, I'm disappointed that it took the outright pain of a faculty member to get people to simply listen.

## Lanny Anais '14

Everyone is failing us. The institution was not built for us and it is failing us. The faculty is failing us. Our student peers are failing us. We need more. We deserve more.



Ravyn Hounsell addresses ECFS community.

PHOTO BY TALIA MARKOWITZ

# Enrique Rosado '17

When I was first admitted into Fieldston, I was sure that I would no longer face hardships in life. I was convinced that Fieldston was a term synonymous with Heaven, and that it was the best place on Earth for me. Sure, in comparison to the Public High School I would have been assigned based on my neighborhood, Fieldston is all I could ever dream for. Its strong academics, beautiful campus, and freshly served cafeteria food made Fieldston appear to be the perfect fit for a student like me. It seemed to be a place where I would feel safe to act and speak whenever I wanted, but sadly, I was wrong. Being one out of four new kids coming into the 7th grade, things were already tough. It also did not help that I was the only new kid of color. Friend groups were already written in stone and I did not expect to wiggle my way into them. It wasn't until I came across the only other student who identified as Dominican and Puerto Rican that I felt like I was finally accepted somewhere at this school. Coming from a school where students of color, mainly black and latino students, were not uncommon, I never felt the need to declare myself a student of color and search for another student with the same background as mine. I never felt the need to speak about my experiences as a student of color at my school because for the most part, we were all of color. And of course, there were different experiences among us, but nothing we would ever have to discuss. This all changed once I got to Fieldston. For the first time in my life I felt the need to wear how I identified racially on my sleeve. My experience was no longer one shared by almost everyone in the

entire K-6 school. Instead, it was one that I shared with one person out of the entire Middle school. Looking around and seeing faces that look nothing like yours, voices that sound different from yours, and backgrounds that you can't relate to is not something I would wish for anybody. Walking around feeling like an alien in the place I was supposed to call home, is not the feeling I was expecting to experience when I first came to Fieldston, and this has to change. Students should not feel like they can't speak up in their classes because they're the only student of color in the room. Students should not feel like they're not as good as the white students just because they're of color, nor should they punish themselves for only mingling amongst the other few students of color instead of branching out and meeting others. This is what Friday's protest was about. It was about turning Fieldston, an institution built for the white man, into a space that's safe for its students of color. It was about holding Fieldston in its entirety accountable for the countless ways in which it has failed us students of color. Most importantly, the protest was challenging Fieldston to uphold the ethical values that it prides itself on having. After Friday's protest, I believe that Fieldston is on a path of self-development, a shift that will completely change how students are accepted and treated at this school. Fieldston community, you've heard it here first. If the administration does not make an effort to hear us out and work with us to make Fieldston better, we will protest as many times as is necessary for them to hear us.



Ariana Baez '18 addresses the school during Friday's Protest. PHOTO BY THEO MATZA

## Ariana Baez '18

Growing up I never felt pressure to identify myself as anything because quite frankly, I did not know who I was. Sometimes I still ask myself this same question. Coming into Fieldston was a huge culture shock for me. I was accustomed to going to a school where the student's faces looked similar to mine or to those of people living in my neighborhood. At Fieldston, I didn't have that sense of familiarity and I was forced to ask myself the same question I have been for my entire life: "who am I?" This school has a habit of putting people into boxes. They pointed out an accent that I wasn't aware of, they thought my last name on Facebook was a joke, and I was confused with the other Dominican girl in my grade who shared my last name. I came to Fieldston because I thought I would feel comfortable in every aspect of this school. However, now the only place I find true comfort, is in Randy's office, an office usually packed with mostly people of color. I do however have to thank Fieldston for helping me embrace my ethnicity. Without Fieldston I never would have had the opportunity to say I was a proud Dominican because I was never brown enough for my Dominican friends. Here I am able to be in a native speaker class that allows me to read stories from authors who may or may not look like me, but who share similar ex-

periences to me and who speak my first language. I am privileged to attend an institution like Fieldston but I do not feel like a valued member of the community. I feel silenced in classes where I am the only person of color and I gravitate towards other people of color because we may be completely different people, but we can relate in many ways as we attend this PWI. This school needs more students and faculty of color. Faculty acts as great allies and mentors to students of color and having a more diverse student body would allow for students of color to feel less voiceless and more comfortable and important in this environment.



Enrique Rosado '17 addresses the school during the protest.

PHOTO BY THEO MATZA

# Tuesday's Roundtable

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were present. Bryce Kassalow (V) stated that he was disappointed by the “roundtable because [he] was touched by Friday’s protest and thought others were too, and yet when the conversation continued, white students were nowhere to be found.” White students and faculty are not excused from these discussions, in fact, Kassalow states, “if you’re white, not only are you not off the hook, but you have more responsibility than anyone else to discuss racial issues because you have the power.” Others, such as Saoirse MaherGreene (V), were not surprised by the lack of attendance by white students. MaherGreene states, “one thing I want to make clear is that this isn’t the first time people of color are saying these things; this is the first time we are being heard. Someone said that they were surprised that there weren’t more white

students there; I wasn’t.” Ciara Cury (V) was also disappointed by the turnout. She states, “I was really surprised that for as many people who showed support for the protest, not enough people showed up to the round table.” In order to effect actual change and move beyond simply talking about race, everybody has a responsibility to step up and participate in community discussions.

These last few days have been eye-opening for many white students and faculty, as well as the school administration. Spurred by the recent discussions, many people are beginning to review the demands of the protest and make alterations to the curriculum in an attempt to provide a better platform for discourse and for making Fieldston the inclusive community it ought to be.

## Alonzo Cee ‘14

*“Excuses.*

*Excuses are the bridges that lead to nowhere.*

*They are the tools of the incompetent.*

*They build monumental nothingness and those they dwell upon them are seldom good for anything else.*

*Excuses.”*

Above is a poem I learned during my initiation process into Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., the first intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity established for African-American men, founded at Cornell University in 1906. It resonates right now because there are a lot of people at Fieldston who are making excuses for the events that transpired last week. Bigger than the event was the fact many did not understand the historically racist implications of said actions. Worse than that is the response to the event that has riled up the students, faculty, and alumni of color. The steps taken after the fact have been stagnant to say the least, and the only good that has come of the incident was a rally organized by students of color to capitalize on racial negligence at Fieldston.

I happened to be at the school

the day of the watermelon incident and the protest, speaking to both students and faculty on both occasions. I even tried writing a Facebook post addressing all the problems concerning the situation, and from what I hear all attempts to help have fallen on deaf ears.

So this is where we are today...

The problem cannot be placed on any one individual person, and the attempts of students, faculty, parents, and administration to either shift blame or attack certain people is rather selfish. There are continued attempts for damage control, unnecessary badgering, and conversations with undertones of racism and microaggressions. This issue has even transcended racial divides as certain people add to the flames of destruction, incompetence, and monumental nothingness, regardless of race. It is sad that it has come to this; a school that prides itself on diversity and inclusion is struggling at just that. This is not new to many of us, but to others it is a complete shock, which makes it hard for it to set in.

*“Piss Poor Preparation Promotes Piss Poor Performance, Piss Poor Performance Promotes Problems.”*



Alonzo Cee '14 addresses the school during the protest.

PHOTO BY THEO MATZA

Our problem starts at the roots, which is our preparation. There has been a failure in handling this issue and preparing for the issue in the first place. It shows in how it is being dealt with and what people are saying to me from all sides. There is general lack of knowledge, avoidance, and upright denial when considering race. All of this starts with preparation; in how we teach, what we teach, who is teaching, and who is taught. These issues need to be dealt with properly and we need to know how to deal with them properly, so we need to take into consideration the seriousness that is our preparation.

Last point to be made is in regards to the attacking nature of people towards Marie and the protestors. Why is Marie being attacked? Who has the audacity to victim blame for something that clearly has racial implications? Just stop because there are so many things wrong with that for which I don't have time to explain. If you need help seeing that, there lies the problem in the first place, for which you need to take yourself back to where I discuss preparation or even excuses. Also attacking the protestors or even questioning the reason, cause, or how it was run is a big problem. Reason: to point out racial issues at Fieldston. Cause: watermelon on a black dean's desk added to already fueled racial negligence. How it was run: through the stories and emotions of very courageous students, faculty, and alumni of color. When you start getting in your feelings and start fighting against people who are oppressed by society, you have a problem, even if you are a part of the oppressed group.

I really don't know what else to

say. This has really just drained me emotionally and I don't even go to Fieldston anymore. I come back because I want to bring what I've learned to help those who need it the most. If you don't want it, then that is your loss.

To those that fight the good fight, I have one more poem for you: Our Deepest Fear by Marianne Williamson.

*“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.*

*Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.*

*It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.*

*We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?*

*Actually, who are you not to be?*

*You are a child of God.*

*Your playing small does not serve the world.*

*There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.*

*We are all meant to shine, as children do.*

*We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.*

*It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.*

*And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other permission to do the same.*

*As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”*

I bring you what I know so that you may shine and manifest the glory that is within yourselves and everyone around you.

Sincerely,  
Alonzo Cee

# President Address

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compels us to to construct a Cabinet dedicated to creating meaningful and impactful changes around our school. With the collaborative efforts of Cabinet, teachers, and the administration, this school can achieve true progressivism.

Also, in our promise to augment the freshmen Peer Mentorship Program (or PMP), we hope to place an even greater emphasis on discussions of race. We hope that this work will set a standard in our community's awareness of issues and discussions we have in the high school.

Speakers at the walk-out also highlighted the importance of affinity groups and their role in creating a safe space for people with like narratives to discuss common

experiences. While these are indisputably essential to our community, and should be created for a larger range of identifiers, we'd like to foster a school wide community that is open to talking about other taboos in addition to race. For instance, Fieldston has trouble discussing basic identifiers including religion, socioeconomic status, and student health. We hope that recent discussions have opened the doors to examining these and other social identifiers in a constructive way.

As presidents, we cannot let the events of Thursday the 26th be forgotten. It is paramount that we help lead the charge for consistent change and further education of the Fieldston community.



Dassa Philipson addresses the school during the protest.

PHOTO BY THEO MATZA

## Kim Emile Cont'd

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As a mother of a black boy living in America, I was grateful that my son found his strong voice at a time when too many that look like him are made to feel invisible and permanently silenced.

Less than two weeks after returning to school, during recess Austin was playing soccer with his friends as he did pretty much every day. However, on this particular sunny day in April a verbal altercation over a soccer ball turned into a life-changing incident where Austin was called a slave by a peer and "whipped" with a t-shirt. The incident is still too raw and painful to recall in detail for me. I was in shock that this happened to my son Austin, the child who I named after the city in Texas because he was born on Juneteenth. This is the day that commemorates the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas, also known as Emancipation Day.

We are still processing the effects of this incident as a family. What came out of this horrible event was the evidence of ethical behavior that we still have as a body. We were immediately contacted by administrators, trustees, parents, faculty, staff, alums and students. They represented the tapestry of humanity that is Fieldston. They were of all backgrounds, races, religions, ethnicities and social classes. The common message was that they compassionately denounced what happened to Austin, and they were here for our family however we needed them. I asked everyone to respect the fact that Austin was not ready to talk about what happened publicly and to give him time to heal. The community respected his wishes and quietly supported us in ways untold throughout this year. My gratitude for this support may never be adequately expressed.

On Friday, May 27th history was made again at Fieldston when a group of high school students walked-out of class in protest of

another alarming incident where watermelons were left in an African-American dean's office. When Austin heard about what happened, the disappointment he had was palpable. He looked at me and said "How could this possibly happen again so soon?" I feared that as a result he would further turn inward and suppress his feelings, but something happened that I never could have imagined. While on the Quad listening to the students and faculty speak out about their experiences, Austin said to me, "Mom, I am ready. It is time to tell everyone what happened to me so that this does not happen to anyone here ever again." Austin asked me to tell his story. I turned to Arielle and she said, "You have got to do this now Mom." She took my hand and walked me to the microphone. Although unprepared and teary eyed, I did my best to represent him and convey his experience. I am saddened that our community had this experience but as a result of the process, and because of the students who spoke that day, Austin was able to gain a new voice.

Given the current climate in our country, I feel that we are uniquely positioned at ECFS to be local, national and world leaders. Founded by Felix Adler in 1878, we have been pioneers of multiculturalism and progressive education for over 130 years. At this very moment each one of us in this community is called to stand together against the biases that we witness in our society. However, we must start at home first. We have to equally implement programs that educate ourselves about the diverse populations that exist within our community. This can be done through curriculum changes, faculty training, parent seminars and student education. We have to first get it right within these stone and brick walls. It is only then we can move outward and impact the world.



Malakai Kajo addresses the school during the protest.

PHOTO BY THEO MATZA

# “Life on the Hill”

BY KAYA WEST-UZOIGWE

Our brown faces hang in the corners of their minds.  
 To help the school’s image.  
 They are perceived as heroes,  
 and we are perceived as in need of aid.  
 We speckled their environment.  
 Their culture.  
 Their administration.  
 Against any congealing,  
 They only appreciated us segregated  
 Where we could be tokens  
 in their pawn to fit a quota.  
 We learned to become sightless,  
 so we would not notice our faces standing out in the mass.  
 We learned to wear our mask,  
 and to assume it as if it was another identity.  
 Due to our pigments,  
 it was our duty to get down on hands and knees in contrition,  
 for being able to compete.  
 Your label as despot is now eliminated,  
 because we are no longer your tokens.

## The Fieldston News

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Ethical Culture Fieldston School

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From Top Left to Bottom Right, Tahlyah Ellis, Damon Xavier, Melanie Cooper-Leary, Jesse Cooper-Leary (III), Tyler Lederer-Plaskett (V), and Gina Apostle.

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