



Reflections
Justin Henry '19
A Prayer Service for Healing
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Good afternoon, all.

My name is Justin Henry and I will be serving as the chair of the Student Leader Alliance for Multiculturalism for this academic year.

I stand before you all today with the heaviest of hearts. Words cannot describe the emotions coursing through me at this very moment with the incidents that have occurred over the past couple of weeks. During this time, many issues that impact my community are arising. We are witnessing systemic issues in our justice system. Furthermore, we are disproportionately affected at higher rates by mass incarceration, police brutality, poverty, and general socio-economic inequality. These issues have impacted generations of our nation and if we are to protect those to come, we must stand together.

It seems like we can't go on social media, watch the news, or even walk down the street without there being talk or acts of social injustice. How much longer can we sit here and watch this happen before it's someone we love and care about? Before it's one of us? I'm at a loss for words. I don't feel safe and I don't feel welcomed.

I feel like as a black man my existence means nothing. It scares me that I have to wake up and walk outside everyday not knowing if I'll be the next black man targeted by racial profiling. Not knowing if I'll get a chance to speak to my family and friends ever again. The thought alone terrifies me but so does the term "alone." This place is my home but sometimes I feel left out and discouraged because it's very rare that I see a face that looks like mine. Someone that I can look up to, to call mentor and find comfort in during these trying times. Someone who can genuinely understand because they've faced similar struggles.

It's extremely important that every black man out there know that we are kings in the making. We are important and worthy of life. We are more than just the color of our skin. We are more than the neighborhood we grew up in. We are more than clothes we wear and we are more than just a statistic! Strive for excellence and never stop. Don't feed into the box that society tries to trap us in. Continue to support one another because we are a community. Make every single day count. Take advantage of every opportunity thrown your way. Expose yourself to the success stories of our people. There is magic and power that flows within all.

As a community we should make sure that every person of color, culture, sex, gender, socio-economic status and religion feel valued and welcomed. It goes way beyond saying sorry or I understand. You can't possibly understand a person's pain when you haven't been in their shoes. Scout Bostley once said, "To say you understand my pain is like stabbing yourself in the leg because you saw me get shot. We have two different wounds and looking at yours does nothing to heal mine."

To our allies, I ask you to stop christening yourself as an ally if your actions don't prove it. Ask yourself; do my actions match up with my aspirations?

As a leader within SLAM, we believe that every part of this community should be working to raise consciousness and enhance the experiences of our diverse population. Students of color are everyone's students. If you care about something that much, you will find a way to make social change! It can be through engaging students in cross-cultural conversations, expanding the co-curricular experience and integrating these topics in the academic curriculum.

Educate yourself. Listen. Show up. Speak Up. Hold people accountable. Promote nonviolence. Demand justice. Use your platform. And be Proactive.

You shouldn't have to wait until it affects you to stand up for what's morally wrong. To not stand against injustices is a disservice to our students, our families and our community, as well as the foundation on which the school was built upon. Marci Walton once said, "We need to look at how racism is woven into the institutional structures. Let's take down structures brick by brick? What will your brick be?"

This sort of work can't be done by one person! We need each and every one of you. Thank you.