

Dear Ms Avery,

As a St Mary's girl, we have constantly been told that we are forces for change and that our voice should be heard. With eliminating injustice and equality being a Mary Ward characteristic, we thought that it was only right for us to speak about this matter. We decided to speak up because if we are silent, it shows that we are compliant on the current treatment and oppression of our fellow brothers and sisters. As you are aware two weeks ago, the murder of an innocent black man at the hands of the police surfaced all over social media, with the phrase "I can't breathe" being engraved into our minds.

Racism has been an ongoing issue not only in America but all over the world. It is starting to become normal to see these innocent black people being killed. However, people seem to think that the problem is only in America but fail to see that there is also racism in the UK. Events like this serve to highlight the injustices embedded into our society and shed a light on the injustices the black community faces daily. As a collective, we thought it was only right for us to bring these issues to the school community.

For a school that prides itself on "diversity", we feel like there should be more active education on the history of the black race and slavery. We do understand that the school curriculum fails to scrape past the surface of black history but we believe that the role of the school is to step up where the education syllabus fails and provide us with the education on race that we need. This is important for us all: for us in the black community knowing of our heritage and past gives us a deeper sense of identity as well as community and for those who may come from countries in which their schools shy away from discussing race at all – with this education they become aware of these situations and this can result in them doing their part. We feel as though not enough conversations are being conducted and this needs to change.

In these last few years of being here, we have seen the lack of light being shed on important black events such as Black History Month. One assembly was done in boarding and nothing was said about this in main school- despite the fact that the majority of our community are boarders, the discussion about race should not be confined to the walls of the Mary Ward House. We feel as though there is more time and dedication put into other events such as Chinese New Year and other significant events. With black people being the minority in the school, it feels as though we are being overlooked, even if it may not be intentional. We strongly believe that as a school you have a duty to tailor and cater to all students and this can be done in many ways.

After deliberations, we have collated simple ways that the school can show their support to the black community. These ideas include: having more diverse teaching staff as sometimes it serves as motivation, bringing speakers in to talk about black history and topics beyond slavery (the many contributions from the black community to society), promoting black history month more whether it is through decorations around the school or assemblies within boarding and main schools and having fundraisers to raise money for charities in support of the movement or other black causes.

This letter is not being sent with a malicious tone or intent but to inform and raise awareness on how we as a community are feeling. If we are silent now there will be no hope for real change or improvement in the future. The aim is to de-stigmatise discussions on race and racism and turn it into a topic that is discussed openly in St Mary's. We want you to proudly and actively stand with us, against racism and promoting that black lives matter.

*"There comes a time when silence is betrayal" – Martin Luther King, Jr.*