

AMI/USA Racial Equity Statement*

Organizational Growth

Dr. Maria Montessori's call was to educate for peace. The charge for Association Montessori International of the United States (AMI/USA) is to promote global peace, guide the natural development of all children to allow them to realize their full human potential, and to recognize and uphold human rights for all through the application of Montessori principles. Montessori pedagogy was intended from its onset to be an aid to life and a tool for liberation and empowerment. Yet, we have been witnesses to, and participants in, behaviors that have silenced earnest protestations against bias and racism toward Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other marginalized groups. After nine of our members experienced a painful racial incident at the Montessori Refresher Course in Seattle, WA in early 2020, after living through the devastating televised death of George Floyd, and after watching the powerful social justice movement that changed global thought and demanded a shift in world-wide racial paradigms, we have been awakened.

Atonement

We live in a racialized society and we are socialized into a race-based culture. Racism is a socially transmitted disease passed down from generation to generation and is a social determinant of health that has a profound impact on the health status of children, adolescents, emerging adults, and their families. (Trent, Dooley, Dougé, 2019). Its legacy has yet to be reckoned with and the effects still live in our institutions, communities, homes, and even in the individuals that make up our collective organizations. We deeply regret that AMI/USA has allowed the social ill of racism to create barriers in our organizations and schools that do a disservice to the children we ultimately serve. We cannot continue to be complicit in this behavior. It stands in the way of transformational changes required to achieve true education for peace, justice, equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the organization and all Montessori communities.

Transformation

It is time that AMI/USA commits to deliberately and intentionally adopting values and practices that will transform our organization from one that has not been fully welcoming to all marginalized people, to one that embraces and shares power with all people. To realize meaningful and sustainable changes, we are taking action at the organizational level to create an anti-racist, anti-bias, equitable Montessori culture. We commit to providing the time and financial resources to have key stakeholders, including the Executive Director, members of the Board of Directors, the organizational staff, and the Human Rights and Social Justice Committee (HRSJ) advisors, receive on-going training that supports our awareness of our shared American history, interrogating personal biases and adverse racist behaviors, and developing effective skills to view all aspects of the organization through an anti-bias/anti-racist lens.

We strive to honor and employ human rights and social justice values in all aspects of the organization and intentionally have those holding leadership and advisory roles include the historically suffocated voices of our colleagues. We will routinely examine organizational policies and practices that maintain patterns of structural racism that disadvantage BIPOC and others with overlapping intersectionalities. We

will consistently measure progress to inform professional development needs and organizational adaptations.

Advocacy and Hope

We value the lives, lived experiences, contributions, and talents of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) with whom we work and serve and are striving to establish an organizational ethos that prioritizes humanity. We understand that this evolution requires perpetual work. We acknowledge that building and maintaining an inclusive, racially equitable culture will be never-ending and that ever-lasting transformation requires courage, persistence, unwavering commitment, and individual and collective accountability. We encourage all members, especially those that identify as an ally, social justice activist, anti-bias/anti-racist educator, social justice healer and/or an artistic and creative storyteller, to lift your voices and together let us all participate in this transformational journey. *"Today an urgent need imposes itself upon society: the reconstruction of methods in education and instruction, and he who fights for this cause, fights for human regeneration"* (Montessori, 2014).



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References:

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Trent, M.; Dooley, D.; Dougé, J. (2019). "Racism is a socially transmitted disease," *Pediatrics*, 144 (2). See: e20191765; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1765>