



HILTON COLLEGE

A letter from

The Head

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Dear friends of Hilton,

The triumph of a democratic state is when its citizens rise up to challenge the status quo when there is reason to do so. As South Africans we have a proud history of this uprising, despite this notion being uncomfortable for some at times; our democratic state is a result of good, brave people putting country before self; ideal before expedience; principle before personal prosperity.

In the wake of the murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana our Hilton boys have joined the chorus of voices in outrage against gender-based violence. Our boys have been determined to be counted among those who raise their voices in unison with those who abhor this scourge and are determined to see a change in the public discourse and behaviour.

Righteous anger is indeed a powerful emotion.

The Xenophobic attacks in our cities have revealed the terrible depths to which we humans can sink when we allow 'otherness' to overrun our common humanity.

As South Africans we have a tragic history of violence. Sadly, we have learnt to solve problems through the exercise of power that has often been rooted in physical abuse. Our politics of race, class and gender bias is something we have not yet conquered and on some days it is clear we have a long way yet to journey.

A boys' school must address the notion of masculinity in a world jaundiced by the false impersonations of this construct. It is a complex construct to challenge and to foster at the same time. We need strong women: mothers, female teachers and sisters, to assist us. We need strong male role-models: fathers, male teachers and brothers, to demonstrate masculinity in its most true, most noble, most honourable, most humble form.

Our young men must learn to live and to love as an equal. They must learn to celebrate all as equals and indeed to go further and elevate others before self.

We are at this place in history. Each generation has a defining moment and a defining theme in our human story. Our role is to guide our young men to lead the discussion in their circles of influence, such that the narrative of #MenAreTrash is changed. This will necessitate bold action on the part of our sons. Our sons must call out those who make lewd jokes about women; our sons must choose to stand apart from those who conform to the norms of 'boys will be boys' banter; our sons must engage in dialogue to understand the vulnerability of our daughters; our sons must rise above the populism of the day and challenge their friends to treat every woman with dignity and equality; our sons must determine to live according to a higher standard.

As the Vice Chancellor of UCT, Prof Mamokgethi Phakeng, said this week: "It is important that as a community we recognise the significance of this moment. We must use this opportunity to remember Nene and rise up against sexual and gender-based violence at our university, in our communities, and in this country."

I urge you to help your sons reflect on their perception of masculinity and upon their role in changing the narrative in our country. Together we must move forward as a country. Your sons are a part of our future. Guide them well.

Sincerely,
George