



HILTON COLLEGE

A letter from

The Head

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Dear Parents and Boys of Hilton,

From time to time as a parent, as an institution, as a collective, it's good to feel proud. The article penned by Motheo Makwana and Hlumelo Notshe, and posted on our Facebook page, concerning the ongoing struggle against racism which has been brought into stark relief once again in the senseless killing of George Floyd, is a powerful indication of our ongoing journey to right injustice.

I am proud that young black men have a voice and that this voice has airtime at an institution such as ours. I am proud that, unsolicited, there is freedom of speech. I am proud that the articulation of ideas - a crucial aspect of any education - is a vibrant reality here. I am proud that our journey along the path of redress continues and that young black men feel confident to raise objection, to stand up and be counted, to be honest.

My curiosity, as a student, led me to read seminal texts such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's "Decolonizing the mind" and Steve Biko's "I write what I like" before they were popular - because I had an inherent belief that we are all equal and that the construct of apartheid was inherently evil and these texts reflected a new voice I had been restricted from reading. I believe an education must get one to question, and to assist one in formulating opinion that may be different to that of one's peers or elders.

In the language of struggle, the term deconstruction is often used. I would posit that deconstruction is only half of the battle. Our journey of transformation at Hilton continues to be as much about deconstruction as about reconstruction. Deconstructing something leaves a void and one must be very careful not to leave this void but rather to be deliberate in ensuring one reconstructs another vision in its place.

Our vision is that of a non-racial, open and welcoming school. A school proud of its African heritage and of its African location; a school prepared to be counted as proudly African with a global reach. A school that aspires to contribute to the South African narrative as we reconstruct our shared futures together, young and old.

We may not underestimate the collective damage that a repressive system has had both on the oppressor and on the oppressed. Until we create sufficient opportunity to unpack this reality we will always be defensive or offensive. We need to find the language of unity and of humility as we chart our way forward.

I believe schools should be beacons of hope in their communities, however near or far these communities may reach. It saddens me that at this time of insecurity, with particular reference to Covid-19, our schools have not once been championed as places of hope; rather they have been positioned by the adults as political sandbags to hide behind and hurl accusations from. Most schools are run down, dilapidated spaces that have forgotten how to foster hope. I am slow to apportion blame but surely we must do better?

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As we reconstruct a world of equality we must all play our part. As an older white South African male I understand that my voice carries prejudice whether I like it or not. I must learn to listen more, to be quiet and to hear the cries from those who have been unable to voice their opinion for many years. I carry with me the embodiment of that which oppressed another race whether I like it or not.

And so, I must work to ensure all races, all cultures, all creeds are afforded a place wherein they can feel safe, feel equal, feel a belonging.

I do not consider this a choice but an absolute necessity.

I am proud of our progress on this journey to date. I am proud of our young men of all races. I am proud of all who have embraced the reconstruction of who we are as a country.

I am acutely aware that there is still a long road ahead. For me, this road is filled with hope. Schools should be beacons of hope; from my vantage point, I believe ours is.

Regards,

George Harris
Headmaster