

## **BLACKS LIVE MATTER – A SOBERING AND EMPOWERING REALITY AMONG MY PEERS**

Corbin Taylor, Class of 2022 – St. Joseph's Preparatory School

Being a student in the sixth largest city in the United States has made me feel like a tadpole in a large pond or a needle in a haystack. The feeling of being so miniscule in such a large place like Philadelphia is sobering and empowering to the point where the noise of this city is either a buzz of life or the low growl of death. Finding the balance between those two extremes is the challenge that me and many other students face while absorbing the knowledge that lies within such an amazing city. During this new age of advocacy for black students I feel like I have found the balance between feeling like a small fish in a big pond and a big fish in a small pond.

Coming to that state of peace in such a large environment was not done alone. I feel like I was working towards this moment by being involved in my school community but recent events within our society have pushed me over the threshold of being consciously black and surrounding myself with people who acknowledge that and respect it. Being involved in school was the start of this process but the barrier to this always was I could not always put myself in the shoes of some of my peers because of the separate experiences we all have but as America woke up during this pandemic I realized how little that mattered. I realized how much our blackness alone should help us unite against the voices that wanted to belittle our experiences as a collective.

Working together during this time has helped me find my place as a student in such a large community. I feel like being the President of my schools Black and Latino culture club during this time and also working on inclusion strategies with other students and our director of diversity and inclusion has given me the notion that I am actually making change and that is what makes me feel content in the space that I am in.

As the beginning of a hybrid style school draws closer the nervousness of being in person has set in. The reason why I feel like this can happen is that performative activism is at an all time high in an age of social media many of my peers who do not share the ideology that is morally just have been pretending to be with the cause that empowers people that look like me. My fear of performative activism comes from the fact that I feel so content in the strides that I have made with my classmates can all be taken away if their agreement to advocate for change was really just a facade to not be an outcast during the purge of peers who do not believe in justice frankly.

The era of Black lives matter is far from over but the time of me feeling like I have not found my place in such a large city is a thing of the past but it is definitely sobering to see that it took the deaths of many people who look like me to help wake up so many people.

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