



THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

ANITA SKOP, *Community Superintendent*

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COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 15  
131 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201  
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Dear District 15 Community:

While we all live through history on a daily basis, there are some moments in time where we collectively remember the events of the day. We remember where we were when we heard a piece of news that was so earthshattering that it changed how we saw the world. I was a sophomore in high school working in the Guidance Office when President Kennedy was shot. I woke my six month old baby up to see Neil Armstrong walk on the moon. I was at a school waiting for a meeting on the morning of September 11, 2001. Today was one of those days and I felt that I could not let today go by without contextualizing this equally earthshattering, historic moment.

Two years ago I had the honor of attending a Congressional hearing on education with the Chancellor. I was like a little kid. I was in awe of everything, and while the political differences were painfully obvious, the order and the rule of law were clearly on display. Today I sat at a computer in the midst of a pandemic and watched armed insurrectionists attack that same Capitol building in the hopes of stopping the formalization of the election results. I watched them tear down the same American flag they displayed and replace it with the one that spoke of allegiance to one man. I watched as the response to this horrific act was far less rigorous than the response to previous antiracism protests, and I cried for my country.

Like most Americans, tonight I am in a kind of shock. No matter what political affiliation you espouse, today's events were not what we want for our country. The sad thing is that while people may say this is not our America, for many people it has always been this way, and we have often chosen not to see it. Perhaps the underlying hate and fear of all of our differences that we have perpetuated finally became a raging fever just as powerful and pervasive as COVID 19. **BUT IT DOES NOT HAVE TO CONSUME US!** I know we can change this because I have seen the power of love and caring in District 15. I have watched teachers and principals adopt families and bring them groceries and holiday gifts. I have seen our BCO continue to conduct a toy drive in the midst of a pandemic. I have seen families donate their own food cards to families in greater need. I have seen Food Services provide frozen holiday dinners and free food across the city. I have watched people from NYCHA housing and multi-million dollar brownstones sit together at tables and discuss rezoning and admissions and realize they all wanted the same things. I have heard people of color share gut-wrenching stories of discrimination and physical abuse that have changed people's perspectives forever. I have seen our children unite to march for social justice. We do not have to divide ourselves. We can come together.

In my heart I believe that we must unite in order to rebuild our country. We must care not only about ourselves, but about all the members of our communities. We must have the hard, honest conversations and go forward together. We must see ourselves as one family, a family that stands up for each other and works together to make real changes that ensure that everyone is valued

and appreciated, that no one has to be afraid. This is not in any way aligned to any one political agenda. It is about our collective humanity. Now is our moment to truly redefine who we are as a people and as a nation. We can come together and heal ourselves, not just from the disease that is ravaging us, but from the equally virulent divisiveness that has almost literally torn our nation apart. We can do this. Now is the time, and when we do this, we will ensure that we are true to that most basic and universal of dreams... we will make the world a better place for all of our children.

With hope for a New Year of peace, love and unity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anita Skop". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anita Skop