

TRUE PEACE IS NOT MERELY THE ABSENCE OF WAR, IT IS THE PRESENCE OF JUSTICE

- Jane Addams

For 120 years, JPA has stood side-by-side with the children and families in the hard places. In the courtroom fighting for just treatment of poor and marginalized families, to investigating unfair labor practices impacting women, and more recently in schools, providing therapy to children, support to families, and offering consultation to teachers. Year after year we have listened to the often-heartbreaking personal stories of intergenerational trauma, the impact of discrimination on black families, and the daily scramble to meet basic human needs.

We have also shared the joy of seeing our clients' successes: the child who experienced a safe and nurturing relationship with his therapist, and now likes attending school and the teacher who feels compassion for the traumatized child exhibiting challenging behaviors. And we have felt deep gratitude for the parents and family members who have invited us into their lives as we worked together to support their children so they are able to fulfill their highest potential at home, in school, and in our community.

But the events over the last week are something different. As one of JPA's leaders told me, "For years we've known what has been happening in our community. But now everyone can see." Indeed, we have seen. We cannot turn away from the video of the horrifying arrest of George Floyd that led to his death, or the aggression towards Black lives over and over again as they innocently tried to birdwatch in a park or go for a run. We have watched in real time as peaceful protests turned violent. We have watched our nation and our community convulse in the face of systemic racism.

Inside JPA we are talking. We are sharing. We are sitting in the hard spaces of hurt, disappointment, fear, and discovery. This time is different. This time must be different. For there can be no peace until our Black brothers and sisters trust that we are all committed to building a just society that embraces them as equals.

In these troubling times, we are reminded of what our founder Jane Addams wrote "Nothing could be worse than the fear that one has given up too soon and left one unexpended effort that might have saved the world."

We join all those who refuse to give up and all those who reject violence. We dedicate ourselves to the hard work of building positive, respectful, and trusting relationships that have the potential to transform the world. We will expend every effort on behalf of children who need us. We believe in this work because we have seen the goodness and the talent in the beautiful faces of the children we serve. This time must be different - for them.

