To our dear Heart & Hand community-

I write to you today to say loudly and unequivocally that Black Lives Matter.

My heart is aching. The tears are streaming down my face. And I am scared. I am scared that our country will never allow the beautiful Black children that Heart & Hand exists for to flourish. I am scared that in two weeks our attention will move on from the agony, anger, and honesty that is surging around us, and we will have accomplished nothing. I am scared that as a white woman leading an organization that serves people of color, that I will not get things right at this most critical of moments.

At Heart & Hand we value community and connection - not simply recognizing, but cherishing, the interconnectedness of humanity. Our Black community members are suffering. They are enduring disproportionate health and economic burdens from the COVID pandemic. At the same time, they are being compelled to plead for the safety of their bodies as we add George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery to the list of countless other Black lives lost to police violence and institutional racism. And while I cannot ever truly understand that pain, I am connected to my Black friends, colleagues, and community members, and my heart is heavy.

Yet through all this filth, I can conjure hope. I see hope in the worldwide demonstrations that people are calling the world’s largest civil rights movement. I see hope that this horrific vortex of events could actually be the perfect storm for change. And I see hope in the eyes of the incredible Heart & Hand young people who show up with love, despite all the world is asking them to carry. And this hope fuels me to act.

Effective action starts with introspection. Yesterday I listened to our incredible Heart & Hand staff members share their heartfelt demands that Heart & Hand be and do more for our community. And Wednesday I recommended to Heart & Hand’s Board of Directors that we gather to articulate and affirm our personal and organizational commitments to ending racism. Because as long as pernicious racism exists, our mission to empower all young people to realize their potential is in jeopardy.

We need you now more than ever because the stakes could not be any higher. We cannot effect systemic change alone. Please connect with us and share your reflections. And I look forward to continuing the conversation about Heart & Hand’s journey to disrupt the racism that endangers our vibrant children’s futures.

In solidarity,
Mary Cipollone
Executive Director