



January 22, 2019

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

We are writing in response to your recent tweet about our school, Poly Prep. It was an oversimplified and inflammatory reaction. Language can be powerful and persuasive, especially given your platform as our city's mayor. We feel that you conveyed a misleading message about our school that has done more harm than good. Here's the reality:

Last week, our student body was made aware of a racist video containing two white students dancing in blackface and making monkey noises. In response, we, representatives of Umoja, Poly Prep's affinity group for students of color, along with Student Government, condemned this offensive, dehumanizing, and alienating act of racism. When we felt that the school administration did not respond sufficiently, our Student Government addressed the feelings and opinions of our student body in a statement you can find [here](#).

On Friday, January 18th, during our annual assembly in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Talisha Ward and Jeovanna deShong-Connor, co-presidents of Umoja, read a letter to the administration. In a passionate speech, they expressed the collective frustration of the student body with regard to our administration's response and included a list of expectations for further administrative conduct. The letter can be found [here](#).

After the speech, over four hundred students walked out and staged a sit-in organized by Umoja, packing the school hallways for almost two hours. During the sit-in, students distributed post-it notes, advocacy pins, and posters, all of which expressed our collective desire for unity and change. Over 250 post-it notes and posters detailed students' wishes for change, and the messages have sparked further productive conversations with our administration, within our broader school community, and with other New York City schools.

We invite you to come visit our campus before you pass judgment about our institution. As a student body, we are absolutely committed to making our school a space where all feel respected and safe. What is absolutely clear is that the recent representation of our school in the media is not accurate and misrepresents the overwhelming majority of us.

Regards,

Poly Prep Umoja and Upper School Student Government