

## Ten Minute T(ea) with Mr. Freeman-Coppadge

*Interview conducted by Marianne Lu  
April 13, 2017*

Q) Throughout your time at Groton, do you think that the campus's view on race has changed? How?

A) Yes, I absolutely do. Although I think the change began in the year before I came (I came in the fall of 2013). The campus climate at that time was such that people were really beginning to realize that not talking about racial issues was not helping us. That was the same fall that the Maqubela's came. The whole campus had an opportunity to start some conversations that hadn't happened before. What I've seen since my arrival is a greater willingness to talk about racial issues. And I've also witnessed some of the growing pains that come with it. It's not comfortable to talk about racial issues that have assorted history. People say things, either thinking that they're innocent or being ignorant of meaning. And this produces a conversations that can be painful but valuable.

Q) What do you think is the biggest issue surrounding race is on campus? How do you suggest that we solve it?

A) The biggest risk we face as a community right now is becoming a community where political correctness trumps education. If you think about racial history if the US, there are so many aspects. We have so much to learn. Just because you learn why you shouldn't say the n word doesn't mean you automatically understand racial terminology or the way that Jim Crow laws played out in the shaping of American housing, for example. There is so much to learn, and the danger that Groton and the nation faces is not learning because it involves tense conversations with people. Sometimes we say offensive things knowingly or unknowingly, but we risk nobody saying anything for fear of offending someone. Then, the people who don't know will remain unknowing.

Q) This is a touchy subject, but what are your views on the n word incident this fall ?

A) That was a very upsetting event for a lot of people of different races and for different reasons. One thing I think about often is: what would have happened if that incident had never occurred? There is a large possibility that we would have had a whole lot of people graduating without a deep understanding of the history, the meaning, the usage of that word.

The same thing is true with regard to the circle talk last week. Was it good that we ended up showing a film featuring black face? No. But was it good that the student body now understands what it is and why it's offensive? Yes.