

[\*File Black Students\*]

A Personal Letter to Emory Freshmen From a Concerned Professor

Dear Freshman:

You are no doubt excited by all the new experiences you have had in your first few days at Emory. You have been receiving a lot of reading matter about the school you have chosen to attend, about various activities you can undertake, and about the issues of our times. Are you confused by it all? You have a right to be and classes have not begun as yet!

The purpose of my letter is to discuss with you in a rational manner the issue of racism, particularly as it affects Emory. Racism is defined by Funk and Wagnalls as "An excessive and irrational belief in or advocacy of the superiority of a given group, people, or nation, on racial grounds alone". It implies race hatred, and is not a term to be used loosely. Is there racism at Emory? Last spring President Atwood said that racism did exist at Emory. He was careful to say that racism was multi-colored: white, black, and yellow, and he called for its elimination [[elimination]] from our university. He certainly did not imply that everyone was a racist, or that our school was rampant with racism.

What have you heard about the issue? I am afraid that most of what you have been exposed to has been one-sided and exaggerated, with vicious attacks on our school by some of our own students, Anonymous sheets have appeared saying: "Go Racist - Go Emory Greek System"; "Emory is a Racist Institution"; "Emory must erase bigotry, racism, discrimination and SLAVERY". A paper sent to you with the authors identified said that only one kind of racism is the major problem of Emory today – White Racism, defined as follows:

“White racism is the conscious and unconscious belief deeply ingrained in all white people by their institutions, that White Culture and the White race is superior to all other cultures and races,”

Let me apologize to you for your introduction to rational thought at Emory College: the above definition, though not rational, is clever. Note that if you deny you are a racist, you are just not conscious of being one. How these writers can possibly know the subconscious of so many people they have never met, I do not know. Do they really know their own subconscious?

Now to assert that Emory is a "racist institution" is to contend that it stands and works for racism as a university. This is absurd. No one pretends that Emory is perfect, but those imperfections that exist are being attacked by the university. It is totally irresponsible to imply that racism is part of the institutional structure of the university.

You have probably been invited to participate in an educational program this year on "racism", as President Atwood described it. The leaders of this program have already announced it as a program on "white racism", admitting that the latter term may antagonize large numbers of people at Emory. Now this term does not antagonize – it simply insults the intelligence of rational individuals who are as anxious as anyone to eliminate whatever forms of racism exist at Emory.

Let me urge you as intelligent and impressionable young men and women to "keep your cool" about the issue. I hope you will agree with me that we must avoid irresponsible statements and unrealistic demands if we are to make real progress. If the present trends continue they may polarize our community and cripple the educational function of Emory, to the detriment of all our students.

Sincerely,

R.A. Day, Jr.