

[*Dean Ward
File Black Students*]

August 26, 1969

Miss Rena M. Price
Assistant Chairman, Black Students Alliance
Emory University

Dear Miss Price,

The move to the new building with the consequent reorganization of library services has presented a great number of problems, many of them not solvable without taking into account divergent factors, and requiring consultation and some delay. I have given thought to the requests of the Black Students Alliance which have recently been passed on to me by Mr. Paul Cousins, who was appointed by President Atwood to serve as liaison between your group and the University Administration with respect to library matters. I shall endeavor to give you answers that will enable you to make an authoritative report on the matters you have discussed with Mr. Cousins.

1. Exhibits: There are seven wall exhibit cases in the Asa Griggs Candler Library. Two of these next to what was formerly the Reserve Book Room might be used exclusively for exhibits in connection with Afro-American studies. An alternative, which I favor, would be to plan such exhibits two or three times a year using all the wall cases for a month on each occasion. In order to plan these exhibits I invite you to appoint a committee, including yourself and two other members of your choosing. I would suggest Miss Nancy Jones, Chairman of the Art Exhibits as of the Student Center Board, as a possible candidate, and I would ask your committee to work with Mr. David Estes, Special Collections, who is Chairman of Library Exhibits and who will serve officially as

liaison in this matter. The function of your committee would be to plan your exhibits and gather the material. Mr. Estes will assist you in putting them up and achieving an effective display.

2. Periodicals: Periodicals are added to our holdings as need for them is established and as funds are available. Ebony, for instance, is already being received, and others, for example, the Negro Digest, have been ordered. The Liberator will be added in due course. Popular magazines such as the first two mentioned above will continue to be placed in the periodical alcove next to the former Reference room. They will be among about two dozen popular journals to be placed there. Learned journals and more specialized publications, of which there are a dozen or more already in the Library of special interest to your group (e.g. Journal of Negro History, Journal of Negro Education, Phylon), may be readily consulted in the new Woodruff Library. Request for new subscriptions should be directed in every instance to Mr. Turner Cassity, Assistant University Librarian in charge of Serials and Binding. His office is in the Woodruff Library. We have endeavored and shall continue to endeavor to provide a representative selection of serial publications. This is one of the heaviest burdens on the Library's annual budget since it normally involves not only subscription but binding and the frequent replacement of worn-out issues.

The solution to these two problems presents no special difficulty. Established library policy covers them, and they can be taken care of in the regular course of operations. The next two problems require major policy decisions which the Director of Libraries cannot and should not take without consultation. There are, however, regular specified procedures that will obtain for the Alliance careful considerations of its requests.

3. Afro-American Reading Room: This provision of an Afro-American Reading Room in the library should be taken up with the Library Policy Committee

of the University Senate, which has the authority to make major policy decisions in regard to the University Library. The Committee, composed of faculty and students, hosts monthly meetings. Dr. Grant Kaiser, Professor, Department of Romance Languages is its chairman. The Alliance should present its request for an Afro-American Reading Room to him, and arrange with him to have a representative or representatives in attendance at the meeting when the matter is on the agenda. Normally, the September meeting is wholly occupied with the annual allocations of book funds to departments, but it is likely that your request could be scheduled for the October meeting.

In this connection, however, I should point out that the establishment of a separate Afro-American book collection in a separate study room has obvious and serious disadvantages. In the first place, our ideal is the whole library for the whole student body. The establishment of collections into specialized segments, separately placed, would go far toward destroying the ideal of service to which we have held with firm consistency since I came to Emory some fourteen years ago. The resisting of proposals for fragmentation—setting up a number of departmental collections in different parts of the building or in removed areas of the campus—has made it possible for both undergraduate and graduate study to be pursued in one location with a convenience impossible at those institutions that have dispersed their resources. Moreover, to judge from the use of material we already have, these collections are in active use in numerous areas and available book funds simply will not permit duplication of titles in the general book collection beyond reserved book needs. In the second place, I wonder what would be the scope of the collection. As you are well aware, books relating to Black America—historical, sociological, economic, artistic, etc.—are numerous. I should think that even works of a general nature would go far beyond the shelving that could be provided in a room.

The same questions would have to be asked regarding a separate catalog. The card catalog in its central location makes the whole library and the Emory library system available to all users, and the Atlanta-Athens Union Catalogue exhibits the books and journals of the entire academic Atlanta-Athens area. The setting up of a separate catalog is an expensive duplication.

There are considerations that I wish you to take into account in discussions of the Afro-American Reading Room that you have projected. These are the realities of the situation which must be faced by the University.

4. Resources Person for Afro-American Studies: I should welcome the addition to the library staff of a resource person with a comprehensive knowledge of the Afro-American field, particularly for working with the faculty in building our resources as well as for helping students to locate and use these materials. There comes to mind immediately a professional librarian, a graduate of the Atlanta University library school, who would be a good choice for the position and who might be interested in considering it. In many ways he would serve you and our special needs. Unfortunately, our library budget for next year does not permit any additions to the staff. As a matter of fact, we lack a substantial sum to carry out present commitments. Furthermore, my requests for financial aid in several areas, still awaiting the provision of necessary funds for books, staff to keep the library open, etc.) render it impossible to make further requests. As matters stand, while I am in sympathy with the idea of adding a librarian-specialist in Afro-American studies to the staff, my previous calls on the University budget for the relief of matters of a pressing nature make it impossible for me to act directly in your behalf in this matter.

I know that at this time you realize that the University Library is engaged in an extraordinarily complicated process of reorganization. It will take some time before the process of restoring order to general operations

is completed, and further development, however desirable, must be delayed until the new building operation is underway. Nevertheless, the Emory University Library will endeavor to make a speedy progress in all necessary ways as goodwill, careful planning, and financial backing will permit.

Sincerely yours,

Guy R. Lyle

Director of Libraries

GRL: em

P.S. I return your lists, checked to show what we have of the titles on the two lists. If there are other lists, I shall appreciate it if you will get one of the students to check the lists when the catalogs are set up in the new building. You will understand that, although we have sought to secure major works in all fields of Emory studies, the library book fund will not permit us to buy all the books in any field. Requests for book purchases are always given thoughtful attention. Those of a general nature should be referred to Miss Marella Walker, Book Order Department. Those in a subject field such as English, social science, physics, etc., should be referred to the appropriate departments since our funds for this purpose are allocated to departments.

Enclosure