

Open Letter to the Faculty

To: Members of the Faculty, Emory University

From: Dr. Marvin S. Arrington

Date: February 4, 1970

Since arriving on the Emory campus, one issue has continued to arise, whether Emory needs to relax its academic standards [*not necessary – and harmful to blacks*] and recruit more Black Students. I have given this subject matter much consideration and in one instance sought to do something about this problem.

I submitted a proposal to the Academic and Admissions committee that would allow for the admission of 20 additional black students. This document will come before you at the scheduled faculty meeting on February 9, 1970, and I certainly would hope that you will give it your utmost consideration. [*don't have quotas*]

There are those who disagree with my commitment to enroll and finance the education of the 20 additional black students talked of in the proposal. One department, the Chemistry Department, seemingly has entered into a conspiracy and of recent taken my statements out of context to prevent the enrollment of additional black students. Because of said adverse actions I want to state my views on why Emory should admit and enroll more black students.

Laurence M. Gould, President Emeritus, Carleton College, stated "I do not believe the greatest threat to our future is from bombs or guided missiles. I don't think our civilization will die that way. I think it will die when we no longer care—when the spiritual forces that make us wish to be right and noble die in the hearts of men, " All along I have stated that because blacks have been discriminated against, because of the inferior education they have received, and because of a second-class citizenship practiced in this country, the

black high school student cannot be expected to compete with his white counterpart where testing is concerned [*granted*]. To give you an example of this I would like to cite you a case in point. I never had nor studied from a new text book while enrolled in primary or secondary school in the Atlanta area. All the books I studied from came from white high schools and in almost every instance, pages were missing or lines had been drawn through most of the words. In addition, I was bussed to a black school and while enroute I passed two white high schools. As though these burdens were not enough, I had to work to make ends meet. Mind you, I was being schooled under the separate but equal doctrine which has proven to this day to be an evil being. It was created to keep blacks in inferior schools.

While I do not want to divulge my experiences I wanted to point out what blacks endure in our free and open society—democracy.

Yes, Doctor Mandell and other opponents, blacks don't score well on competitive examinations because of the circumstances mentioned above and because the competitive examinations presently given are geared toward white standards, and black mores are not included. Thus, it stands to reason, people are more responsive to issues that are relevant to the environment they live in. What I am trying to say is that blacks have not been able to achieve because of racism, hatred, white supremacy, ignorance, lack of concern, blindness, stupidity, non-responsive educational training, and do-nothing attitudes. These factors have hampered blacks historically and still prevail on most southern campuses.

The rights of blacks are pinched off, pinch by pinch. When are we going to do what is right? That is, open educational opportunities to all, regardless of race, creed, or national origin. Certainly, I don't have to plead the case of the black man. For my statements are

not allegations, but established truisms. I rest my case with you on a quotation from William E. B. Dubois:

"The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

This then, is the end of his striving; to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely [[strangely]] wasted, dispersed, or forgotten. The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and Egypt the Sphinx. Throughout history, the powers of single black men flash here and there like falling stars, and die sometimes before the world has rightly gauged [[gauged]] their brightness. Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to

seem like absense [[absence]] of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness,—it is the contradiction of double aims. The double-aimed struggle of the black artisan—on the one hand to escape white contempt for a nation of mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, and on the other hand to plough and nail and dig for a poverty-stricken horde—could only result in making him a poor craftsman, for he had but half a heart in either cause. By the poverty and ignorance of his people, the Negro minister or doctor was tempted toward quackery and demagogy; and by the criticism of the other world toward ideals that made him ashamed of his lowly tasks. The would-be black savant was confronted by the paradox that the knowledge his people needed was a twice-told tale to his white neighbors, while the knowledge which would teach the white world was Greek to his own flesh and blood. The innate love of harmony and beauty that set the ruder souls of his people a-dancing and a-singing raised but confusion and doubt in the soul of the black artist; for the beauty revealed to him was the soul beauty of a race which his larger audience despised and he could not articulate the message of another people. This waste of double aims, this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand thousand people, —has sent them often wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and at times has even seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves.

Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in

one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment;
few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning
faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To
him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed
the sum of all villanies [[villainies]], the cause of all sorrow, the
root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a
promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before
the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation
swelled one refrain—Liberty; in his tears and curses the
God he implored had Freedom in his right hand. At last it
came—suddenly, fearfully, like a dream. With one wild
Carnival of blood and passion came the message in his
own plaintive cadences:

"Shout, O children!
Shout, you're free!
For God has bought your liberty!"

God speed your decision.

Marvin S. Arrington
Black Administrator

