

23 March 1970

Dear Mr. Gatens:

Thank you for your letter of March 15th. I appreciate the deep concern you express, and I found myself almost wholly in agreement with your alarm at the direction in which black student demands have been expressed,, and activities presented. I completely agree with you that it is a mistake to assume that "it can't happen here." I am sure it can. Let me in turn assure you that I will do everything I can to see to it that civility is in fact the rule at this college.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Robert D. Cross,
President

Mr. William Gatens
Swarthmore College

March 15, 1970

Dr. Robert D. Cross, President
Swarthmore College
Swarthmore, Pa.

Dear President Cross:

In the collection address which you delivered a few days before your inauguration as President of Swarthmore College, you spoke at some length on "civility" and "authenticity" as guiding principles for this school's "domestic affairs". The events of the past few days, however, strongly suggest that these high and good principles have hardly been foremost in the minds of the students and administration of this institution.

That civility has been abandoned is perfectly obvious. SASS's actions have been a flagrant display of arrogance and impudence. The means which they have selected are intimidation through "direct action", a tactic of which President Courtney Smith expressed extreme disapproval in his last address before the college. The by-products of this action can only be antagonism and further polarization of racial groups on campus and continued degeneration of the college's ethical integrity. By surrendering to this intimidation, the college administration has and will have committed an equal breach of civility in legitimatizing such action.

The motivational authenticity behind SASS's demands can, I think, be called into question. On Friday morning, I saw a sign on the door to Lodge 4 which read: "Black Cultural Center -- No Admittance". I have no doubt that SASS intends to apply this segregationist policy to Robinson House next fall. What kind of "culture" requires such a clandestine setting for its development? This separation considered with SASS's recent actions and their expressed desire to maintain contact with the "surrounding Black community" seems to point dangerously toward Black militancy and contact with militant leaders such as Muhammad Kenyatta in Chester, and perhaps even contact with the Black Panther Party. Any form of militancy is certainly alien to Swarthmore's ethical tradition and deserves to be suppressed here. The Black Panthers, for example, have stated that one of their objectives is the murder of policemen and elected officials.

I do not wish to be construed as having said that the situation outlined above actually is the case, but it would be foolishly naive to place it outside the realm of likely possibility. For this reason, I think it would be very dangerous to grant SASS complete autonomy over the Black center. Black militants have been known to store explosives and other weapons

in churches and "Black centers". The only way to be sure that this and other subversive acts are not perpetrated in the name of Black culture at Swarthmore is to make Robinson House open to the entire college community and subject to inspection by campus authorities.

A civil and authentic development of Black culture is certainly in the best interest of the college as a whole. The college has a right to guarantee that civility and authenticity are, in fact, maintained in this endeavor. Anything less could prove disastrous.

Sincerely,

William Gatens

William Gatens, '72

Yours sincerely,

Robert D. Cross

President