

Swarthmore College
Swarthmore, Pa.
April 13, 1942

Dear Marjorie Edwards:

Thanks for your encouraging letter.

You would be interested in knowing that upon several occasions recently we have had Negroes eating in the dining room, and to our knowledge there has been no complaint. Several weeks ago an elderly colored minister from Morton had supper with some of our members. At the end of March, about 12 students from Cheney State Teachers College (all colored) ate supper with the folk dancing group. Last week, a colored probation officer from Chicago, who had come East during their school vacation to speak at the college, ate a number of meals in the dining room.

The matter of dormitories might be more difficult. In Wharton, of course, there are colored janitors. In the Prep School (I am told) there are maids--probably white; and of course white maids in the girls quarters. Miss Stilz told me that since a lot of the ~~girls~~ ^{maids} come from Maryland, they might refuse to clean the rooms.

The Board committee did not say much as to the relative preferability of day- and dormitory-students. I think they put the event so far in the future that it really doesn't make much difference to them. Some of us have felt that if Negroes are admitted as day students, they will tend to remain in that category. Moreover, they will not have a chance to mingle sufficiently to make a real adjustment. Even white day students have a hard time becoming accepted. It might be an acceptable compromise, however.

It is hard to say what can be done. Acceptance of Negroes may not come until after a long period, during which people are thinking increasingly about the problem, and there grows up an increasing pressure in the direction of admitting them. Mrs. Ruth Verlenden Poley who spoke to our group yesterday said that Haverford was a much more likely prospect, since (a) it was for men only; (b) the admissions officer stated his willingness to consider Negroes on an equal basis with other applicants; (c) they have already had two Jamaican Negroes who were rather popular; (d) the Board of Managers does not have a precedent, as here, of having taken action against a Negro applicant; (e) the president of the Board is probably more favorably inclined than here. Consequently, it may be necessary to have Negroes be admitted to and accepted at Haverford before Swarthmore considers it feasible.

and sympathetic with our aim
From three persons well acquainted with Quakers and Quaker procedures comes the suggestion that the best method of procedure is simply, when the time seems opportune, to admit them, and then ~~from~~ let the official Board and alumni bodies be presented with the fait accompli. Rather than getting their backs up and their official decision laid down. If they aren't officially consulted, they can say: well, we weren't consulted. We weren't responsible. Let's see how it works out. So I should say: that we should informally and personally reach friends, and ~~perhaps~~ let them vocalize their sentiments to the administration; secure support through Friends channels (there will probably be an article soon in the Friends Intelligencer and The Friend), etc.

Incidentally, Dean Hunt has heard a rumour from at least two sources that there is a scholarship for a Negro student available at Swarthmore. This is distinctly unfounded, and we wish to deny the idea. If you have a chance to do so, will you also deny it?

Perhaps some of the alumni to whom we have written made this interpretation from the suggestion that they indicate their desire to give financial contributions if Negroes were admitted. The latter should still be encouraged. The reason is this: one of the principal objections to Negro admission is fear of withdrawal of support both in the form of gifts and of student fees. Perhaps ~~this~~ this fear could be partly eliminated if there were ~~sufficient~~ evidence that friends of the proposal were willing to contribute towards the deficit.

Incidentally, I am informed that applications among the men are higher this year than ever before, possible because of the college's stated policy against campus military training. The extra press of applications might make this an ideal time at which to introduce Negroes. The latter is just a hypothesis so far; no action has been taken on it.

It was ^{glad} to hear from you. If you could speak ^{or write} to the individuals you mention, it would be much appreciated. Most of us now are busy preparing for finals. Keep up the good work!

Very sincerely,

Don Pelz
Donald Pelz