

23 March 1970

Dear Marjorie:

Thank you for your letter of March 17th. While I completely agree with you in your irritation at the manner and mode and indeed the content of the black students' demands, to call them by their proper names, I hope that we have found a way to respond to what is appropriate in their rhetoric and to resist what is not. Only time will tell about that. In the meantime I thank you for the candor and the directness of your statement. I am in agreement with almost 100% of it.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Robert D. Cross,
President

Miss Marjorie L. Webb
Office of the Registrar

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
SWARTHMORE, PENNSYLVANIA 19081

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

March 17, 1970

Robert D. Cross
President
Swarthmore College

Dear Mr. Cross:

I am in full agreement with the views expressed by Mrs. Gatens in her recent letter to you (copy attached).

I am not the parent of a son at Swarthmore College; but (as do very many of my colleagues at the secretarial and clerical level here), I have other concerns about this situation.

I am a Christian, an American, and a Friend - IN THAT ORDER; and I feel most strongly that the methods used by SASS to force the administration of the College to accede to their demands for an unsupervised Black Cultural Center violate Christian, American, and Quaker principles.

You are no doubt aware that a black militant group calling itself "The Republic of New Africa" (an African Nation on American soil, or some such subtitle) has taken over the Friends Meeting House in Chester and made similar demands: the donation of a building (with deed (!)) to be used as a center for programs dedicated to the "liberation" of the black community from "white racism" and "American imperialism" (and this after the Chester Friends Meeting has spent thirty+ years dedicated to serving the black community of Chester...)

Capitulation will never appease the unprincipled demands of a (tyrant or) group which has its own irrational definition of logic.

Judging from the number of blacks who are not Swarthmore students but who were present on campus participating in the past weekend "sit-in", I find it difficult indeed to believe that such a center as SASS demands would not, through understandable commitments and sympathies, become the active headquarters of any or every black organization in the area - such as the Black Economic Development Conference, Black Panthers, Republic of New Africa, etc. - all of which include known militants and revolutionaries whose objectives, it seems to me, can hardly be lauded by anyone who understands them.

It is believed by many of us in the lower echelons here that there is much more at stake here than the demand for a Black Cultural Center, supervised or unsupervised. It is to be hoped that those who have the power to decide the matter will be influenced by certain considerations other than the present national obsession with the problems of blackness.

Sincerely,

Marjorie L. Webb
Marjorie L. Webb

March 15, 1970

President Robert D. Cross
Swarthmore College

Dear President Cross:

The tuition increase notice was superbly timed!

As a parent, I wish to go on record with the demand that none of the General Fee paid in behalf of William Gatens be made available to SASS in view of the fact that during the '69 Confrontation he was denied the benefit of classes which were cancelled. The Second Annual Event was responsible for the eleventh-hour sabotage of the Student Chamber Music Concert, in preparation for which he spent many hours - a precious commodity to a serious-minded music student at Swarthmore.

The concert's demise was a gross injustice to many other students involved and an insult to two distinguished musicians, Messrs. Zukofsky and Kalish. As Music Department secretary, it was the ultimate frustration of a particularly hectic year.

Like so many other employees at Swarthmore, I have willingly coped with a workload and responsibilities which, if performed for private industry, would net infinitely higher financial rewards, because I felt no small degree of satisfaction in making a meaningful contribution to a worthwhile institution. Even performing these duties in make-shift facilities without benefit of indoor plumbing was tolerable.

Conversations with many of my peers at Swarthmore have convinced me that further capitulation in the face of what an adult perspective should recognize as adolescent temper-tantrums, might well be provocation for drastic response. Employee morale has never been lower. We are neither ill-mannered nor vociferous. This, however, should not be mistakenly construed as acquiescence to or acceptance of further administrative spinelessness. No one in authority has manifested the slightest concern about the effects of recurring crises on us other than frantic attempts to muzzle our reactions to the senseless and tragic death of Courtney Smith. It seems to be the consensus that our tolerance is limitless, our intellects inconsequential and that a verbal "pat on the head" at Christmas is adequate assurance of another year's loyalty.

It is not coincidental that the performance of our duties is made increasingly difficult by student irresponsibility which rises proportionately with administrative permissiveness. It is extremely short-sighted diplomacy which advocates that concession breeds solution under these circumstances. Rather, the current situation at Swarthmore is proof positive that each concession is a stepping-stone to further irrationality and ultimate academic suicide.

Sincerely,

Mary Gatens
(Mother of William Gatens '72)
(Secretary, Department of Music)

cc: Miss Caroline Shero
Business Office