

CLIFTON A. WOODRUM
6TH DIST. VIRGINIA
ROANOKE, VA.

THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

DIANE TAYLOR
SECRETARY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

School for Special Service

February 16, 1943

Doctor Francis P. Gaines,
Washington and Lee University,
Lexington, Virginia.

My dear Doctor Gaines:

I, and others interested in Washington and Lee, have noticed with some amazement the press reports that the United States Army has sent to Washington and Lee, as part of its contingent in the Officers Training Corps, three negroes. I assume, of course, that you made appropriate protests insofar as you were able to do so but I would like to have from you, first hand information concerning your efforts and the present status of affairs, in as much detail as you care to give it to me.

Personally, I do not feel like resting under this indignity paid to Washington and Lee but I would like to know what I am doing before I say anything or take any action.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Clifton Woodrum
CLIFTON A. WOODRUM

February 18, 1943

Congressman Clifton A. Woodrum
Washington, D. C.

My dear Congressman Woodrum:

I am extremely glad that you wrote to me about the question of the Negroes in the Army School for Special Service. I want to recite the facts precisely to you, and then I should be glad if you would let any of our interested friends know the facts, whatever their opinion might be.

We have rented to the Government certain of our buildings, including the dormitory, the dining hall, and Tucker Hall, for the Army School for Special Service, the old morale branch. The organization and operation of this school is entirely separate from Washington and Lee. The School has its own faculty, its own curriculum, its own extra-curricular activities, like newspapers, dances, and what not, and even has a schedule of hours different from ours. Of course the selection of students is entirely in the hands of the Federal Government. These students, by the way, are unusually high tupe men, all officers and all chosen for their qualities of leadership, since they will be returned to the fighting units charged specifically with sustaining or deepening morale.

In the first school, six weeks being the term, there were about 300 regular officers and no Negroes. In the second school there are about 450 students, and this group includes fourteen WAACS and three Negroes.

The position of the Army as explained to us is that this is the only school of its kind in the country, and, I believe, the only school contemplated. The Negro units in our fighting forces need the same kind of morale leadership in the hands of trained specialists that the white forces need. The number of Negroes needed for this leadership, however, is very small, and there would be no possible economy in setting up a school for them. I Believe that if there were a second school for whites located in the North, the Army would have selected it for these men. As it is, the Army feels that these Negro students would have to get this training at our school or these Negro units would not get that type of leadership. I believe the Army does not contemplate at any time sending more than a very small number.

Because our local citizenship understands the complete separateness of the two schools, the entire responsibility upon the Army for selection of its men, and the simple justice of having the best training for those Negro men who risk their lives for our country as much as the white men do, there has not been locally a single chirp of criticism, so far as I know.

It has developed, however, that certain of our alumni living at a distance have been shocked by what they understand is the fact that "the Government has sent Negroes to Washington and Lee". This statement, except in the sense of physical properties owned by Washington and Lee, is a misconception. Our University has its own classes and teachers, recreations and clubs, traditions and fellowships; and the Government has not contemplated undertaking to send Negroes into this Washington and Lee.

You know how much I respect your good judgment and you know that I am aware of your tremendous influence. I should be really grateful if you would read this letter carefully and then give me your frank judgment as to whether or not what I may call the local view point is wrong.

I may add that I informed our Board of Trustees fully about this matter and that the Board, for the considerations I have mentioned above, decided that the fact that there will be a few Negroes in this School, which is entirely a distinct entity from our school and exists to serve a national emergency in which Negroes as well as whites offer their lives, would not be detrimental to the permanent welfare of the Washington and Lee that you and I know and love.

I should be very glad to get your reaction on this matter, and in the meantime, as I said before, I am anxious for our friends to know the exact facts, whatever may be their opinion, and you have not only my permission but my request to be sure that the facts are clear in the minds of any one who might ask you a question about this matter.

With kindest regards and all good wishes, I am

Cordially yours,

Francis P. Gaines
President