

HAMPTON INSTITUTE

Hampton, Va.,

May 22, 1907.

Dr. Wallace Buttrick,
2 Rector street,
New York City.

My dear Dr. Buttrick:-

I am writing you regarding colleges for Negroes. I wish to call the attention of the General Education Board to them because as yet these institutions have received little or no assistance from the General Education Board for advancing their college work.

The apparent omission of these colleges as a class is unfortunate for them, and for the colored people as a race at this period in their development. Though the General Education Board has in all probability not meant to make such a criticism of higher education for Negroes as their lack of action regarding it seems to indicate, yet the colored people are led to think that the Board lacks sympathy for it. They feel that the General Education Board's neglect of the patent needs of the Negro colleges carries with it a criticism of their work, and that the silence of those in the high position of the Board awakens distrust in college work for Negroes in others who have not the time nor inclination to study the situation for themselves.

I am aware, of course, that these apprehensions are unnecessary though they may be very natural. Nevertheless I feel that some signal attention on the part of the General Education Board to the better colleges for Negroes would now be opportune, and helpful beyond the assistance which the General Education Board itself might render. I think too that you will find upon investigation that some of these colleges will measure up fairly well with your requirements in the matter of curricula, and that their efficiency is quite marked. I think too that you will find no small need of work of college grade among the colored people.

LIMITED NUMBER OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

May I call your attention to a few facts regarding this work and to a few items in relation to a dozen of the better colleges known to me? In spite of the common opinion that there are too many Negro colleges, there is but comparatively little college work being done by the schools for colored people. This is pretty clearly shown, I think, by the following table made up from the catalogues of a number of the leading schools and verified by my acquaintance with their work.

| Name of School | Date | Total Enrollment | 3. | |
|---------------------|------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | College Department | Per.cent in Coll. Dept. |
| Va. Union Univ. | 1906 | 233 | 46 | 19% |
| Shaw University | 1905 | 504 | 53 | 10% |
| Biddle University | 1903 | 187 | 110 | 58% |
| Claflin University | 1906 | 633 | 37 | 5.7% |
| Atlanta University | 1906 | 340 | 46 | 13% |
| Atlanta Bapt. Coll. | 1907 | 217 | 20 | 9% |
| Talladega College | 1905 | 622 | 37 | 5.9% |
| Leland University | 1906 | 206 | 20 | 10% |
| Fisk University | 1906 | 525 | 109 | 20% |
| Knoxville College | 1906 | 436 | 22 | 5% |
| Wiley University | 1906 | 508 | 24 | 4.7% |
| Bishop College | 1906 | 383 | 37 | 9.4% |
| | | <u>4,794</u> | <u>542</u> | <u>11%</u> |

I have compared the students in the college department with the total number of students enrolled in each instance. Some explanations are necessary. Claflin and Talladega for instance fall very low in their percentage of college students though they have about as many as most of the other schools. Their low standing is due to the large grammar schools which they maintain as a part of their regular work. Shaw University would have a much higher percentage too but for the professional students who are included in her total enrollment. In the Fisk estimate too more than 150 music students, many of whom are specials, are included, thus lowering Fisk's percentage of college students. At Atlanta University, on the other hand, the children in the practice school are not counted in the college enrollment. This gives the college students an advantage in the percentage. Biddle, the only college having a strikingly high per cent of college students, does not have as high entrance requirements for the college department as

the better colleges, and, on the whole, does not do as advanced work in college as the best of those with which it is compared here.

The U. S. Commissioner of Education reports for 1903-4, 40,997 colored students in the 128 secondary and higher schools for colored people in the United States. Of these only 2,760 or 6.7% are doing college work, while 36.3% of the total number are in the secondary departments and 56.9% are in the elementary departments. So it matters little whether my arbitrarily chosen list be regarded or the more general figures of the Commissioner of Education be taken; it is evident that not an alarming number of Negroes are getting college training, even if we regard such training as superfluous. Dr. DuBois has pointed out in his *College Bred Negro*, No. 5, in the Atlanta University Publications, that only 2,331 Negroes graduated from college between 1826 and 1900. He says, "There is to-day (1900) about one college-trained person in every 3,600 Negroes".

OCCUPATIONS OF COLLEGE GRADUATES

Of these graduates 1,312 reported their occupations. They were as follows:

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| "Teachers: | |
| Presidents and deans | 19 |
| Teachers of music | 7 |
| Professors, principals, and teachers | 675 |
| | total 701, or 53.4% |

"Clergymen:
 including 1 bishop,
 9 missionaries and
 12 presiding elders

Total 221, or 16.8%

"Physicians, etc:
 Doctors of Medicine
 Druggists
 Dentists

76

4

3

Total 83, or 6.3%

"Students:

" 74, or 5.6%

"Lawyers

" 62, or 4.7%

"Civil Service

" 53, or 4 %

"Business men

" 47, or 3.6%

"Farmers: 26; artisans 9:

" 35, or 2.7%

"Editors, secretaries, clerks, etc.

" 31, or 2.4%

"Miscellaneous

" 5, or .5%

"These figures illustrate vividly the function of the college-bred Negro. He is, as he ought to be, the group leader, the man who sets the ideals of the community where he lives, directs its thought and heads its social movements. It need hardly be argued that the Negro people need social leadership more than most groups; they have no traditions to fall back upon, no long established customs, no family ties, no well defined social classes. All these things must be slowly and painfully evolved."

Dr. DuBois also found that 500 out of 700 college-bred men found work immediately on graduation at which they remained employed. Less than 200 turned from a first occupation to a second before finding apparently permanent employment. He

reports also the following cases of activities of college-bred Negroes in addition to their regular occupations:

| | |
|--|-----|
| Active work in religious societies | 101 |
| Investing in business enterprises conducted by Negroes | 48 |
| Contributing to Negro and other newspapers | 105 |
| Editing and publishing newspapers | 40 |
| Lecturers | 21 |
| College and student aid | 20 |
| Benevolent club work | 9 |
| Farming and truck gardening | 10 |
| Nurseries, orphanages and homes | 12 |
| Slum, prison and temperance work | 16 |
| Organized charity | 15 |
| Kindergartens and mothers' meetings | 7 |
| Building associations | 7 |
| Hospitals | 10 |
| Savings banks | 4 |
| Contributing to magazines | 11 |
| Papers before learned societies | 9 |

PROPERTY OWNED BY COLLEGE GRADUATES

Each of these college graduates was asked to state the assessed value of the real estate owned by him. 557 answers showed an ownership amounting to \$1,342,862.50 or an average of \$2,411 of real estate for the 557 graduates.

I think these figures need no further comment.

DEMAND FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES

There is not only a general demand for leaders who are trained to think soundly, and correctly, and to act wisely, but also a specific call for more college trained young people among the Negroes of the South. They are in demand as the teachers of the more advanced elementary work, and for the

increasing amount of secondary instruction. This work the average teachers from the so called normal schools can not successfully carry on. And even the public school officials are beginning to require that teachers have special normal training before they will employ them. Colored teachers with superior training themselves are required to train these teachers for the elementary schools.

The increasing intelligence and prosperity of the colored people together with the more rigidly enforced separation of the races increase the demands for greater numbers of professional men among the colored people. They must be thoroughly prepared or they cannot pass the rigid examinations set for them by the various state boards of examiners. And the farther the colored people are removed and kept from the more cultivated white people the greater becomes their need for having considerable numbers of educated cultivated people of their own race among them. Otherwise there must come a general retrogression from lack of ideals and competent leadership.

A LIMITED NUMBER OF COLLEGES NEEDED

It is not practicable nor advisable, of course, to try to make real colleges out of the dozen schools I have mentioned in this paper. But there are three or four of special promise, it seems to me, that the General Education Board might aid to

advantage. There ought to be several places south of the Potomac and the Ohio where capable young colored men and women could get pretty thorough up-to-date education. Richmond, Atlanta, Nashville and New Orleans have already shown that they are well located for such centers. Virginia Union University at Richmond, Atlanta University and Atlanta Baptist College, at least, in Atlanta, Fisk University at Nashville, and Leland among others at New Orleans are already well established schools with good following and valuable traditions. But these schools are not able to build up strong college departments and to differentiate them from college departments at the weaker schools. If more strong men and good college courses, and better equipment both in the way of dormitories and apparatus could be added in a few places, and some scholarships or student aid in the college department, could be provided, as is common in the great Northern universities, the mass of Negro college students would congregate in these few institutions and their numbers would steadily increase. This would render impossible many of the weaker college courses and would make for strength in organization and economy in the management of college training, for it would minimize duplication. I think religious bias would count for but very little at this stage. Those students desiring to go to college would choose the one where they could get the most at the best advantage just as now they choose Northern colleges without regard to their religious

affiliation or the lack of it.

IMPORTANT THAT COLLEGE TRAINING SHOULD
BE GIVEN IN THE SOUTH.

There is an appreciable increase in the number of students desiring to take a college course. It is very important that this training be given in the South by institutions with active, Christian, missionary spirit, and in touch with the conditions to be faced by the young people in later life rather than in the North by institutions concerned primarily about other things and out of touch with Southern life. And in order to have these well trained youth remain in the South and render their share of service to their people it is necessary that most of them should be trained in Southern institutions.

SPECIAL CASE

Help would do good in any of these institutions, and it would be welcomed by the colored people generally. I wish, however, to call your attention especially to one, Atlanta Baptist College, which, it seems to me, has more pressing needs just now than any of the others. It is also one of the most efficient and deserving, in my opinion.

It is a school for young men and has an enrollment of 217 this year,- the largest enrollment in the history of the school with one exception. This is all the more remarkable when we recall the troubles in Atlanta at the opening of the

school year. The school occupies, however, a position of great advantage. It is the only college of importance for the Negro Baptists of Georgia and Florida. In Georgia alone there are nearly 300,000 Negro Baptist church members - more than belong, it is said, to all other denominations together. The college draws also upon western South Carolina, eastern Alabama, and upon Tennessee since Roger Williams University has been given up. These Baptists are proud of the school. They are also keenly appreciative of the recent appointment of a colored man as its president. The Baptist Young People's Union, the State Sunday School Convention, and the General Missionary Baptist Convention of the State sent resolutions to the American Baptist Home Mission Society expressing their appreciation of the appointment of Prof. John Hope as president and pledging him their support.

The school has enjoyed a healthy, steady growth in numbers and popularity. The chief attractions have been the good curriculum, the exceptionally manly and capable teaching force, the firm discipline, and the location of the school. The corps of teachers is especially deserving of comment. In preparation, in the quality of their work, and in the matter of the wholesome spirit there teachers create in the school, they are not surpassed, in my opinion, by any body of teachers in the colored schools. Five of the college teachers are colored men. Two of them, the president and the teacher of science, are

graduates of Brown University. One is a graduate of Hamilton College. The other two are graduates of the Atlanta Baptist College itself, but one of them has subsequently taken his degree at the University of Chicago, and the other has done summer work at Columbia University. They are clean gentlemen every one. Another colored man of the same grade teaches in the theological department with two Northern white men of pronounced ability. The grade work is done by young lady graduates of Spelman Seminary. The music teacher is a white lady from the North.

The general interest in the college seems to be increasing rapidly. But the school is unable to meet the increasing demands for room. The students have made many sacrifices this year to help out in this direction. There have been three and four boys in every room in the dormitories. These rooms are large enough for only two occupants.

The special need of the college is a building for recitation purposes and for chapel exercises. There is no hall on the grounds that will accommodate more persons than the present student body and the teachers. Entertainments, reunions, etc., have to be held in churches in the city. A building to cost about \$40,000 would remedy this condition of affairs, afford ample recitation facilities for a long time to come, and would increase the dormitory accommodations by relieving one hall now used partly for recitations. It would then be possible to

segregate the theological students, rather mature men, and thus greatly strengthen the discipline. And while this addition to the dormitory accommodations would take care of the increasing numbers of students, it would not necessitate an increased teaching force. The present corps would still be sufficient.

To help this college now will be to aid at the critical moment, it seems; for if it fails to seize its present opportunity, it will not be likely to have so good a chance again. Help here will also mean the strengthening of a natural center for the training of the Negro. In 1900 there were 1,034,813 Negroes in Georgia. Nearly one-third of them are members of the Baptist church and form a natural constituency for this college, to say nothing of others it may attract in other denominations and in other states. It has already built up a greater following than it can accommodate with its present facilities.

It happens too that the Atlanta Baptist College has been so managed that it commands the regard not only of the colored people but that of the white people about it as well. This is saying a good deal for a Negro college situated as it is.

I am

Respectfully yours,

(signed) W. T. B. Williams.