

Voices Not Heard—Letters from Virginians to Gov. Thomas B. Stanley Regarding Desegregation, 1954–1956 (p. 1 of 7)

105 North Belmont Ave.
Richmond, Va.

June 28, 1954

Governor Thomas B. Stanley
Capitol Square
Richmond, Va.

Dear Governor Stanley:

I was very disappointed and distressed to read in Saturday's paper that you planned to use "every legal means at my command to continue segregated schools in Virginia."

Can we not at least try to work out some solution in keeping with the spirit as well as the letter of the Supreme Court decision? Isn't it a little early to admit defeat, to stop even exploratory talks and experiments aimed at implementing it?

I think many people in Virginia -- perhaps more than is realized -- read of the Supreme Court decision with a good deal of apprehension but also, in their hearts, with a good deal of relief. It is bad for persons to think one thing and act out another. With our minds we can understand that God created "of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth." He is our Father and we are His children. Therefore we all are brothers one to another.

It's one thing to say this, to agree to it on Sundays or when we are in the quiet of our own homes. It's another to put it into practice. We haven't done so well there. Segregation and brotherhood can not go hand in hand. One doesn't make a "brother" ride in the back of buses, deny him access to proper housing in many areas, limit his employment opportunities, tell him his children must be kept apart from ours.

The Supreme Court decision would give us a chance to draw our beliefs and our actions a little closer together if we dared let it.

Prejudice, by the very make-up of the word itself, means judging an issue before all the facts are in, all the persons known. It breeds on ignorance, it withers when the parties are confronted with a shared task, when people come to know each other as persons.

Why not use this coming year to test out ways in which people can be made to see each other as persons, ways in which the Negro and white person can meet not as suspicious strangers but as parents sharing a common concern for their children?

Citation: Nancy King to Gov. Thomas Stanley, June 28, 1954, Governor Thomas B. Stanley Executive Papers, Accession 25184, Box 110, Folder 1954, State Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.

Voices Not Heard—Letters from Virginians to Gov. Thomas B. Stanley Regarding Desegregation, 1954–1956 (p. 2 of 7)

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How to begin such a program? I enclose a clipping -- also from Saturday's paper -- that gives what seem to me to be very sound suggestions. I happen to have met and talked with Dr. C. Waldo Scott, staff surgeon at Whittaker Memorial Hospital in Newport News. A brilliant surgeon, he also has a record of constructive interest in his community.

Surely there must be other such men of good will in Virginia with suggestions well worth study, perhaps action. I was encouraged when I first learned you planned to appoint a bi-racial commission to study problems stemming from the court's decision. It seemed an excellent way in which such suggestions could be weighed and then, perhaps, passed on to Virginia communities for trial. I do hope you will appoint such a group as soon as possible.

I do not want in any way to seem to minimize the problems that integration will bring. But Virginians, I am sure, can meet and solve these problems if they approach the coming year with faith and courage and good will, looking for areas of agreement, not disagreement; thinking hopefully, not pessimistically; ready to learn and to grow, not to cling too tightly to the past.

Under your leadership, I hope and trust they will.

Sincerely,

Nancy King

(Miss Nancy King)

Encl.

Citation: Nancy King to Gov. Thomas Stanley, June 28, 1954, Governor Thomas B. Stanley Executive Papers, Accession 25184, Box 110, Folder 1954, State Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.

Voices Not Heard—Letters from Virginians to Gov. Thomas B. Stanley Regarding Desegregation, 1954–1956 (p. 3 of 7)

December 6, 1954

The Honorable Thomas B. Stanley, Governor
State Capitol
Richmond, Virginia

Dear Sir:

I am writing to you on behalf of the students from the State of Virginia who are members of the Hampton Institute Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. As citizens of this Commonwealth we are disturbed by press reports to the effect that our Governor has decided to take every legal step possible to circumvent the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the school segregation cases. We are disturbed by these reports because we have not seen any denial of them by you or from your office and are forced to believe that they must have been issued with your knowledge and approval. We would deplore such an attitude if it had been taken by one of us, we deplore it more because it is attributed to the chief executive of the state in which our Constitution had its beginnings and also the state where the doctrine of judicial review of legislation was promulgated long before *Marbury v. Madison*.

We should also like to register a protest against the action you took in appointing a legislative committee to study the possible effects of the Supreme Court decision in Virginia. You have probably received other protests on the ground that Negroes were not included in this committee and it is not difficult to infer that your choice of a legislative committee was influenced by the fact that there are no Negroes in the legislature and restricting membership on the committee to legislators gave you a defense against the charge of anti-Negro discrimination. Such a defense would have been more plausible if your other committee appointments had followed the same pattern and if Negroes had not been consistently disregarded in your other committee appointments. We would like to be associated with the sentiments expressed by others who have objected to this pattern and respectfully submit for your consideration the proposition that you are governor of all the people in the Commonwealth and the taxpayers and voters in the state include both white and Negro people.

As citizens of the United States as well as of the state in which we reside, we are concerned about the quality of democracy which we profess and ask other nations to accept in our fight for a free world. We can hardly expect the non-white people of the world, and at present they constitute a majority, to work with us against the spread of the evil of communism if we continue to use our public offices for the perpetuation and spread of personal prejudice and discrimination against persons of color.

Citation: Robert Washington to Gov. Thomas Stanley, Dec. 8, 1954, Governor Thomas B. Stanley Executive Papers, Accession 25184, Box 110, Folder 1954, State Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.

Voices Not Heard—Letters from Virginians to Gov. Thomas B. Stanley Regarding Desegregation, 1954–1956 (p. 4 of 7)

Governor Thomas B. Stanley

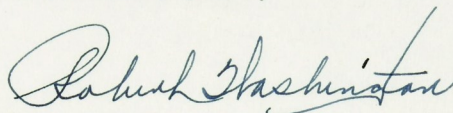
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December 6, 1954

May we recall to your attention, Sir, Item Fifteen of Article One of the Bill of Rights of Virginia, which reads as follows:

"That no free government, or the blessings of liberty can be preserved to any people, but by firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles."

Respectfully yours,



Robert Washington, President
Hampton Institute Chapter
National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People

Citation: Robert Washington to Gov. Thomas Stanley, Dec. 8, 1954, Governor Thomas B. Stanley Executive Papers, Accession 25184, Box 110, Folder 1954, State Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.

Voices Not Heard—Letters from Virginians to Gov. Thomas B. Stanley Regarding Desegregation, 1954–1956 (p. 5 of 7)

THE ORANGE COUNTY MINISTERS ASSOCIATION ORANGE : VIRGINIA

The Honorable Thomas B. Stanley,
Governor of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia

November 23, 1955

Honorable Sir,

The Orange County Ministers Association with 16 of its 18 members present passed by unanimous vote on November 21, the following set of resolutions which are submitted for your consideration:

"The question of segregation by race in the public schools of Virginia is a question of great concern to the people of Virginia, since the decision of the Supreme Court, affirming that such segregation is unconstitutional. Extreme measures have been proposed to deal with the problem, both by those who wish to continue segregation, and those who would favor integration. Many words have been spoken, some of them regrettably bitter. The Orange County Ministers Association, meeting to consider this problem, on November 21, 1955, is constrained to adopt the following resolutions:

"First, we recognize the enormous difficulties faced by many to whom integration is emotionally unacceptable, and we do not condemn any person for holding a point of view in conflict with our own.

"Second, we recognize the enormous difficulties faced by those charged with the responsibility of determining the course of action to be followed by the State of Virginia and we assure them of our understanding and concern.

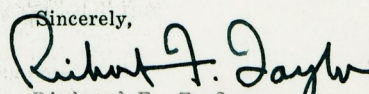
"Third, we express our conviction that any effort to circumvent the law of our land as established through constitutional processes is a potentially dangerous course, leading to the philosophy of obeying only those laws which we find pleasant to obey. This leads to the destruction of government by law, and replaces it with government by mass emotion, which is a dangerous alternative.

"Fourth, we express our conviction that the free public school system must be maintained, in order that education be possible for all our citizens, rich and poor, negro and white. The problem of integration is a small problem compared to the problems we would face if many of the poorer people of our society were denied access to education. Therefore, we express our lack of confidence in those portions of the Governor's Gray Commission Report which might make possible the abandonment of the public school system.

"Fifth, we affirm our own allegiance to the basic Christian teaching on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. We firmly believe in the equality of all men before God, and we look forward with eagerness to the day when the structure of our society will truly reflect that equality."

For the Orange County Ministers Association,

Sincerely,


Richard F. Taylor,
Secretary

Citation: Richard F. Taylor to Gov. Thomas Stanley, Nov. 23, 1955, Governor Thomas B. Stanley Executive Papers, Accession 25184, Box 110, Folder 1955, State Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.

Voices Not Heard—Letters from Virginians to Gov. Thomas B. Stanley Regarding Desegregation, 1954–1956 (p. 6 of 7)

James E. Harper
3274 So. Utah St.
Arlington 6, Va.

Sir:

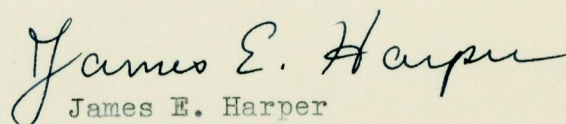
Your plan to deny funds to those school districts which plan to integrate is ridiculous—as ridiculous as a taxpayer refusing to pay that part of his taxes which go to support segregated schools because he does not believe in segregation. Being the father of two school age children, this affects me very personally and I intend to make every effort to see that you and your kind are defeated at the polls in future elections.

Since moving to Virginia within the last year, with the intent of becoming a permanent resident, I have been increasingly disturbed by the un-American activities of yourself and others like you who hold state office. I have become alarmed that in the great state of Virginia we have so many public officers who are attempting to force the people backwards into the blackness of hate and conflict, while the majority of the people of the nation are trying valiantly to progress in their attempts to get along better together.

Your actions against the Negro population have been directly opposed to the democratic and christian principles upon which this country was based; namely, that all men were created equal in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of our creator. I have fought overseas twice for those basic ideas and it is a shock to return and discover that we must continue to fight to gain freedom for all in our own land. To discover that a group of petty politicians insist that a particular segment of our population is to be denied a particular freedom. If I do not fight as strongly at home for freedom to all, as I did overseas, then I feel that my time in the armed forces will have been wasted.

Who knows but perhaps next year or next week you and your kind may decide that I or my family is to be denied the same or another freedom.

It is my hope that bigoted, backward-looking, non-thinking men like yourself will be replaced by straight-thinking individuals who ever look to the future, so that people of all races and religions may live together in peace and harmony as our creator intended.


James E. Harper

Citation: James E. Harper to Gov. Thomas Stanley, [Aug. 1956], Governor Thomas B. Stanley Executive Papers, Accession 25184, Box 110, Folder 1956, State Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.

Voices Not Heard—Letters from Virginians to Gov. Thomas B. Stanley Regarding Desegregation, 1954–1956 (p. 7 of 7)

Hampton Institute
Hampton, Virginia

August 7, 1956

The Honorable Thomas Stanley
The Governor of Virginia
The Governor's Mansion
Richmond, Virginia

Dear Governor Stanley:

This letter is prompted by a report in this morning's paper that you are asking public support for your stand on segregation and by the hope that you might therefore be interested in the opinions of the citizens of your state on this question.

I live in an area surrounded by military installations. The chief industry is ship-building. If the military installations and the Newport News Shipyard were removed from the area, the economic life of the Peninsula would come to an end. Yet the armed forces are integrated here as everywhere else. The ship-building industry is integrated. My children attend a parochial school, which is integrated. I work for an institution that is known around the world, largely because its faculty and staff have always been integrated.

On the other hand, the "public" schools are not integrated here, because the State laws forbid; the playgrounds and other "public" facilities are not really public, since not integrated, because the State laws forbid; the "public" State parks are not only not public and not integrated but are not open, by State order, because the State insists that white people must not be allowed publicly to associate with Negroes.

All this is happening in Virginia, and similar contradictions exist in about eight other states in the United States -- there are only those few ~~states~~ left out of the 48 -- because these few Southern state governments believe they can stem a tide that is rising all over the world, a world in which two-thirds of the people are colored.

Surely we know, we must see, that we will integrate in Virginia and that it will happen in our life-time. Can we not let it happen naturally and gracefully, at least to the extent that it has happened and is happening in the other 42 states and in most of the world? Must we further wound a people whom we say we love, whom first we wounded with slavery and then with the pretense of citizenship, by not letting their children and ours attend school together on the grounds that theirs are not the right color?

As a Virginian, a native and white, I wonder if we can do anything worse than to hurt those we love through their children.

Respectfully yours,
Cary Taliaferro Peebles
Cary Taliaferro Peebles

P.S. I am taking the liberty of releasing a copy of this letter to the press.

Citation: Cary Taliaferro Peebles to Gov. Thomas Stanley, Aug. 7, 1956, Governor Thomas B. Stanley Executive Papers, Accession 25184, Box 110, Folder 1956, State Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.