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## Jim to Dr. Silver, 8 October 1962

Jim Henderson

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810 East 39th Street  
Vancouver, Washington  
October 8, 1962

Dr. James Silver

Oxford, Mississippi

Dear Dr. Silver,

We have just watched the NBC television coverage of the developments at Oxford. Frequently, I have thought of writing you, but have not because I felt that there was no reason to make unwarranted demands on your time, or, for that matter, to clutter your mailbox. The Oxford affair, however, has stirred my conscience, and I feel obliged to write you.

My purpose, then, is to make you aware of the fact that a good number of Negro people in the North are not ignorant of the existence of conscientious individuals such as yourself. I suppose that you might say that I have, in a sense, been on the circuit to emphasize this fact (quite a few people have heard of Dr. James Silver since August). I think that this is very important. It would be a mistake, and quite unjust to summarily condemn all Mississippians as unreasonable bigots when throughout this ordeal men of courage have sought to raise their voices and be heard above the irresponsible diatribe of the demagogue.

Today I received a letter from Dr. Kara Jackson (whom I had also failed to write). She discussed the Mississippi situation also. I'm not sure that I discussed Dr. Jackson with you in any of our conversations. You will recall the student demonstrations at Southern University a few years ago. President Felton Clarke was a shocking disappointment to his race. Dr. Jackson and the faculty at Grambling also have frowned on these demonstrations. I don't need to say that I am very much in favor of peaceful demonstrations (as long as they remain peaceful). The reason should be obvious to you. If nothing is done in the South to call to the attention of the Northern and Southern moderate the evils and injustice of segregation, the realization of civil freedom for the Negro could be another century coming. The opposition to the enrollment of James Merridith at the University is an example of how determined many Southerners are to resist any change.

This morning I discussed the problem in a current events class of seventh graders. One little girl related how her grandfather, yesterday, told of his recent trips into the South. He

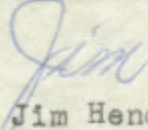
does not think that Negroes should attempt to enter the white colleges of the South because they have their own, many, he said, which are "better" than the whites'. Well, this is just an example of the ignorance of many white Northerners. This man obviously bases his judgment on the appearance of the physical plant. He doesn't seem to be remotely aware of the true purpose of education. We saw James Merridith give as his reason for wanting to attend the University: "Because it's the best in the state". This is in itself a good enough reason.

We (my wife Robbie and I) have sat up late at night to watch the developments in Oxford. We were very concerned about the report that a professor had been injured for voicing some of his opinions which did not meet the approval of some segregationists. We could not be surprised to learn that you were the professor, but I hope that it was not you for your own sake.

I hope that you will take a moment to drop me a few lines in the not too distant future. I have thought seriously about Stanford since summer, although I have not really taken any action. There are a few things you could advise me about. I will attend my first night class this Wednesday. I will have to decide within the next two or three months one way or the other. I am still not convinced that I am Ph.D. material, but the exigencies of my circumstances are pressing the issue in my own mind. A group has started an investigation of student segregation in the Portland area, but they seem to have lost steam where teacher hiring is concerned.

The best of luck. I've gone on too long as it is. Please remember that we are cognizant of and grateful for your courage.

Sincerely yours,

  
Jim Henderson