

February 10, 1943

Mr. James R. Caskie  
Lynchburg, Virginia

Dear Mr. Caskie:

Thank you sincerely for your kind and intelligent efforts in an attempt to clear up a situation that might do Washington and Lee harm.

If Major Glass wishes to make a statement he will act, of course, within his rights. Everybody who reads the statement will have the right and the duty to form an opinion, which is a right and a duty of our democratic government.

What I am concerned about is that the facts upon which this opinion will be formed are stated exactly right. The facts are that we have rented to the Government certain of our buildings and that we have no more control over whom the Government sends to use these buildings than if we had rented a store down town to the Government and undertook to control the customers who come in and go out.

To say, therefore, that "the Government is sending Negroes to Washington and Lee" is not true in the sense that that statement will be generally understood. The Government is sending students to our buildings. The people think of "Washington and Lee" as an educational operating agency, with its teachers and its students, its campus organizations, its fellowships, and its traditions. If this be Washington and Lee, and I think it is, the Government is not sending Negroes to Washington and Lee.

Now for your own information, the reason the Government does not set up a separate school of this kind for Negroes (and I think it is setting up separate undergraduate units for Negroes) is because the Army School here is essentially a graduate or professional school, training men who will in turn become instructors or leaders of groups in that particular work. The number of Negroes needed will be small, though a certain group is a need that Negro soldiers may have the best training to fight our battles. I think that perhaps a dozen Negroes at any one time will be the maximum that the Government can use for this purpose, and it would not be economical to set up a school with the investment in faculty and equipment represented in the school located here, merely to train a handful of officers. This is the Government's point of view, and I believe that the matter of racial consciousness does not enter into the decision.

I am sure you know these facts as well as I do, but I wanted to recite them to you, particularly because I hope no acute controversy will develop.

With kindest regards, I am

Cordially yours,

Francis P. Gaines  
President

GASKIE, FROST & WATTS

JAMES R. GASKIE  
E. MARSHALL FROST  
JAMES O. WATTS, JR.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW  
LYNCHBURG, VA.

February 11, 1943

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

Dear Dr. Gaines:

I have your letter of the tenth instant and am glad of the information you gave me with reference to the particular situation there of the School for Special Service and the reason why it will be impracticable to have a special school for the negroes in view of the small number who will be attending such school. I also appreciate your statement to the effect that the Government is not, in the last analysis, sending negroes to Washington and Lee.

Yesterday afternoon I got a copy of the editorial written by Mr. Glass and mailed it to you. As I was just leaving the office I did not take time to make any comments. As far as I could judge the editorial in no way reflected on Washington and Lee except that it did imply some criticism of the Board in that it had agreed to this school without putting in the contract a clause protecting the School against the possibility of negro attendants. I had explained to Mr. Glass that it was impracticable and impossible under the circumstances and our judgment had been that it was much better to get a school of this kind, since it was not a Washington and Lee school in any sense, and further, would send down to Lexington only the very best class of officers, rather than take the chance of having some other school much less desirable forced on us and with the students probably composed of a conglomeration and mixture of all kinds, who would probably do a great deal of damage to the plant and equipment or, on the other hand, close up the school for the duration and thus not only failing in what is our function, namely, to carry on normal education, ~~and~~ further, throwing all the professors out of a job and which would make it very difficult to start up after the war as many of them might have been lost to us by that time.

As I stated, Mr. Glass is rabid on the negro question and my suggestions had no effect on him whatsoever, since he stated that to his mind the larger question of the social system of the south and the question of the mixture of races transcended all other consideration. He further stated that personally, he thought it would have been much better to have taken all the risks even of the college being forcibly taken over by the Government to send whom they pleased or, to have the school closed up with all the attending results rather than to do anything which would imply a consent to the presence of negroes in General Lee's school.

Mr. Glass admitted that this was merely, of course, his viewpoint and he recognized our right to our viewpoint though he strongly disagreed with us.

In view of my conversation with him, his editorial was milder than I expected, so far as our action in consenting to the School was concerned. My personal view is that the best course to follow now would be to let the matter rest and not get involved in any newspaper controversy, which would simply add fuel to the flame and cause much wider publicity. Of course, if other newspapers take it up and the matter begins to receive any considerable publicity, my viewpoint on this might change.

GASKIE, FROST & WATTS

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

LYNCHBURG, VA.

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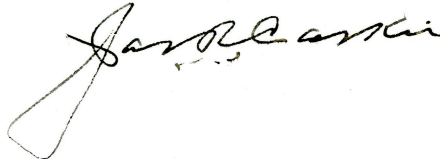
Dr. Francis P. Gaines

February 11, 1943

So far I have heard very little reaction here and no criticism of Washington and Lee. Of course, there may have been some as I lead a somewhat secluded life and do not get around much. I am inclined to think that if nothing further is said, the matter will soon be forgotten.

With kind regards, I am,

Sincerely,



JRC: MGC