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Jim Serianni informs incoming students about Denison University's struggle against racial inequality

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July 19, 1968

To the Members of the Class of 1972:

... The only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack--mounted at every level--upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. All of us know what those conditions are: ignorance, discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, not enough jobs. We should attack these conditions--not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience. We should attack them because there is simply no other way to achieve a decent and orderly society in America....

Lyndon Baines Johnson

Address to the Nation

July 27, 1967

The purpose of this letter is to make the Freshman Class aware of the national race relations dilemma and the situation at Denison, so that you may give serious thought, especially as events evolve this summer, to your possible commitment and alternative courses of action.

An educational institution cannot harbor racial mis-understanding, based on ignorance, illogical racism, fear, and non-communication. Discrimination has caused the economic inequality and educational deficiency which keep the ghetto Negro, who lacks both facilities and atmosphere conducive to intellectual growth, out of Denison. Now, as his struggle for equality and acceptance threatens us with violent civil war or police rule, we can no longer ignore the problem. The college campus is the ideal environment for men, though separated by generations of discrimination and apathy, to learn how to live together. Denison is under a moral obligation to increase its percentage of Negro students and enforce all facets of integration. Over 300 Denison students and faculty members, concerned by this crisis in human relations, have committed themselves to active combat against ignorance.

These Denisonians are not confident that they can achieve major effects nationwide, but they are searching their own prejudice and challenging apathy on this campus. Members of fraternities and sororities are striving against discriminatory pressure from their local and national organizations. Black and White "sympathy groups" discuss their own racism and posit logical paths toward communication. The faculty are adding an inter-departmental Negro Culture course to the curriculum and presenting a lecture-discussion series on the Riot-Commission Report. Mixed student recruiting teams are speaking in city schools, trying to increase diversification of qualified students in the belief that an atmosphere "receptive to all ethnic and cultural backgrounds" will enlarge the Denisonian's educational experience. Denison Christian Association members participate in weekend and vacation work-camps to city slum areas, Tennessee, and Puerto Rico. A "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Fund" drive is being conducted on campus. In the planning stage are a Race Relations Weekend in October and

a tutoring program aimed toward academically deprived students. The Denison Campus Government Association has pledged its support to all these activities, and your support will be welcome in the fall. A special meeting during Orientation Week will introduce you to specific committees.

Major attitude changes are occurring at Denison, and YOUR active interest is of vital consequence. Those who believe the time has come for caring would urge that you read the Kerner report, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Bantam Books, March, 1968 (\$1.25), which is available through the Denison Bookstore, Slayter Hall, if you can't locate it at home. You might find summer rush an opportunity to discuss this issue. Come to college informed, ready to talk knowledgeably and participate enthusiastically to make Denison your college ideal.

With sincere concern,

(signed) Jim Serianni

President
Denison Campus Government Assoc.

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