

THE FEDERATED THEOLOGICAL FACULTY

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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THE FEDERATED SCHOOLS
Chicago Theological Seminary
Disciples Divinity House
Divinity School, University of Chicago
Meadville Theological School

July 21, 1960

Mr. Duggan
South 14th Street
Chesterton, Indiana

Dear Mr. Duggan:

A telephone conversation with my wife this afternoon revealed to me that you are not interested in maintaining neighborly relations with those who would invite Negro friends to their home. Since I presume that a personal conversation with you on this subject would be painful to both of us, and would accomplish little, I have felt it necessary to write this letter.

During the last ten years I have studied at five of the universities in this country, and am now a faculty member at a sixth. In the course of this experience I have made a number of close friends of many races, and have discovered that the color of a man's skin makes no difference whatever in his capabilities or personality. While studying for the Christian ministry, I learned from the clear teaching of the Bible and from the testimony of the great men of the Church through the ages that all races were exactly equal in God's sight, not only because He created them equal, but because He redeemed them all by shedding His blood for them on the Cross. And as an American citizen, I recognize that our Constitution absolutely forbids the preferential treatment of any race, or the subjection of any race by any means whatever.

Unfortunately - in spite of the clear evidence provided by education, religion, and patriotism - there are still some communities (generally in rural areas) and some individuals (generally with inadequate educational backgrounds) who persist in maintaining prejudicial positions toward other races. For example, while in California, I found that a close Japanese physician-friend of mine had difficulty renting an apartment - simply because he was not a member of the white race. In Chesterton, I have discovered, there are quite a number of people who set themselves up as judges of other races; and the result is that non-whites find it next to impossible to live in the town. To put it mildly, such a back-woods attitude is unfortunate; to put it more strongly, it is a damnable perversion of the Christian religion, since it is inconceivable that Jesus Christ would have acted this way.

Now I realized that the attitude just described existed in Chesterton (and in fact this is one of our reasons for moving - since we have many educated friends of other races who do not deserve to be subjected to such bigotry when visiting us); but I certainly did not think that my

next-door neighbors took this attitude. Now that I know that you are of this viewpoint, I have several things to say - and I would appreciate your passing them on to any of the other neighbors who feel as you do.

First, from a purely personal standpoint, my property is my property, and I have both the legal and the moral right to invite anyone I wish to visit me on it, as long as they do not attempt to interfere with the activities of my neighbors on their properties. Therefore, I shall continue to invite whomsoever I will to my home, and I strongly suggest that those who do not like this mind their own business. The people I invite will, it is true, differ from my neighbors in several respects. They will, to be specific, be educated, intelligent, Christian people - not ignorant, prejudiced, bigoted, pagan individuals who are too stupid to recognize that a man should be judged on his own merits rather than on the basis of some irrelevant criterion such as the color of his skin. The people I shall not invite to my home are those who would play God - hold-overs from the KluKlux Klan era of ugly, prejudiced ignorance. Unhappily, it seems that the latter consists not of nasty Negroes, but those whom I am forced to regard as white trash.

Second, I strongly recommend to those who disapprove of my guests that they make one-tenth of the effort I have to study racial factors and their importance, and that they gain some of the wide experience that urban and university living provides. Then there is some slim possibility that they may discover that they have been living in a dream-world of bigotry having no basis whatever in fact. They may then find that they are as behind-the-times as people who still think that toads cure warts.

Thirdly, I wish to emphasize that the kind of bigotry you apparently represent makes you unworthy of the name of American citizen, and pushes you beyond the pale of the Christian Church. No American who realizes that boys of all races have bled and died for them in our wars, and no one capable of reading our Constitution can doubt for a moment that our nation is founded on the principle that every person deserves equal treatment with everyone else. From the Christian standpoint, we have Paul's clear statement that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, but ye are all one in Jesus Christ." You tread on very dangerous ground - I tell you this as an ordained minister of the Gospel - when you live as if this passage were not included in the Holy Scriptures. If you consider yourself a Christian, you had better start thinking and living like one, not as an out-and-out hypocrite. Our nation has been criticized by the world, and the Church has been criticized by those of other religions because there are still "Americans" and "Christians" who maintain prejudicial attitudes towards those of other races. God help you, Mr. Duggan, if you come before your Maker with this kind of attitude toward some of those He has created and redeemed.

(The Rev.) John W. Montgomery

P.S. After returning home this evening, I was informed of the disgusting conduct toward my wife and children on the part of the neighbors - the name-calling, etc. - and the fact that you were in large part responsible for stirring this up. Mr. Antonio Mazzala in particular used disgusting language toward my wife, and the rest of you seemed to enjoy the show

immensely. In order to have this permanently stopped, we notified the Chesterton Police Department this evening concerning the whole matter, and a policeman will be contacting Mr. Mazzala tomorrow. The police suggested that if there is any further trouble along this line that I obtain the equivalent of a cease-and desist order from a Justice of the Peace; needless to say, I shall not hesitate for a moment to do this if I hear so much as a whisper relating to this matter from you or any of the other neighbors in the future.

