

Oxford, Miss.
8 March 1956

**** NOT THE ORIGINAL LETTER ****

Dear Mr. Kirk:

Your letter of March 1st. is at hand several days. I wanted to think first before I tried to answer.

I won't try to tell you what to do in order to meet the problems you will face. The reason is, these problems will be individual ones, peculiar to the time and the place they will occur in. I mean, rise into sight, when they will have to be coped with.

I have found that the greatest help in meeting any problem with decency and self-respect and whatever courage is demanded, is to know where you yourself stand. That is, to have in words what you believe and are acting from.

I have tried to simplify my own standards by and from which I act, as follows, which I pass on to you.

1. Segregation is going, whether we like it or not. We no longer have any choice between segregation or un-segregation. The only choice we now have is, how, by what means. That is, shall segregation be abolished by choice, by us in the South who will have to bear the burden of it, before it is forced upon us.

I vote that we ourselves choose to abolish it, if for no other reason than, by voluntarily giving the Negro the chance for whatever equality he is capable of, we will stay on top; he will owe us gratitude; where, if his equality is forced on us by law, compulsion from outside, he will be on top from being the victor, the winner against opposition. And no tyrant is more ruthless than he who was only yesterday the oppressed, the slave.

That is the simple expediency of this matter, apart from the morality of it. Apart from the world situation in which we are steadily losing ground against the powers which decree that individual freedom must perish. We must have as many people as possible on the side of us who believe in individual freedom. There are seventeen million Negroes. Let us have them on our side, rather than on that of Russia.

That is the problem, as I see it. Why don't you get in touch with the Student Council on the TARHEEL editorial board at North Carolina, Chapel Hill? They have handled the questions splendidly. I can think of nothing which would do more to hold intact integrity and decency and sanity in this matter, than a sort of inter-State University organization for simple decency and rationality among Southern college men and women, young men and women. A confederation of older men like me would not carry half this weight. I can imagine nothing which would carry more weight than a sane, sober union of student representatives from all the Southern schools, standing for the simple things which democracy means and which we have got to show the world that we do mean if we are to survive: the simple principles of due process of the majority will and desire based on decency and fairness to all as ratified by law.

This may be difficult at first. It is a sad commentary on human nature that it is much easier, simpler and more fun and excitement, to be against something you can see, like a black skin, than to be for something you can only believe in as a principle, like justice and fairness and (in the long view) the continuation of individual freedom and liberty.

And remember this too, when you have to meet these individual problems: you will be dealing with cowards. Most segregationists are afraid of something, possibly Negroes; I don't know. But they seem to function only as mobs, and mobs are always afraid of something, of something they doubt their ability to cope with singly and in daylight.

Consult your friends, if you like, send me a copy of your letter to me, with a copy of this, under a covering letter, to the editor of the N.C. TARHEEL, and see what comes of it. And let me know.

Yours sincerely,

William Faulkner