

COPY

Mr. James Weldon Johnson,
Secretary, N.A.A.C.P.
New York City, N.Y.

November 2, 1921.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to solicit the aid of your association in a rather novel case, and I do not know whether or not it is your policy to give aid in such a case. But the question involved is so serious and the underlying principle so fundamental to the future welfare of colored students in this University, that I feel it my duty, as the spokesman for the fifty colored male students here, to, at least, lay the question before you, and trust it to Heaven that there are some means by which your association can give us relief.

Conditions in this city are at present almost unlivable for a colored student. The attitude of the instructors and officials of the University toward us is practically the same as that toward the white students. But the city seems hostile toward us and bent on getting rid of us. Their attitude is felt most keenly in the matter of housing. No one will rent to colored fraternities and no one will sell in livable localities. It is almost impossible in the whole city to find a decent room to live in.

The fraternity of which I am a member, to take advantage of this situation, bought a house on contract of sale last summer. The moment it became known that we had bought, a powerful but sinister organization, raised money to keep us from gaining possession. The old tenant, whose lease was up Sept. 1, has refused to move. We have brought an action of forcible entry and ouster, but her attorney, realizing that our means are limited, is endeavoring to delay the trial indefinitely so that we shall become unable to meet our obligations and at the same time, fight the case, so that we will be forced to sell our interests or lose almost a thousand dollars that we have paid. We are almost at that point now. The case comes up for trial Saturday and unless we get a favorable decision and the trespasser decides to give over, we shall be unable to proceed further and shall be forced either to sell out or risk losing our interests. We are represented by Mr. S. Joe Brown of Des Moines, a very able lawyer and would like to push the case and get our rights, but lack the means. As it is purely a racial issue and threatens to make it impossible for colored men to remain at this University, we thought that we could get your association to act for us and take a mortgage on our interest in the house for the re-payment of your advances.

William Edwin Taylor

-2-

Nov. 2, 1921.

This is my sixth year in the University, sir, and I have been in this city long enough to note the crystalization of sentiment against us. There is an organization of the Ku Klux Klan here, and I have not the least doubt but that they are financing the scheme to effect our ruin. As a law student, knowing the principles involved and that this tenant is holding over without color of right or title, and solely because we are colored, I should very much hate to see our adversaries succeed because of our financial embarrassment. I am sure that Saturday, when the case comes up for trial, they will again come to me (as I am representing the plaintiffs) to effect a compromise, by which they will ask us to sealout. If your association can in anyway render us assistance, and you will inform me of this in due time, I will not surrender. You may state any terms you wish, we will accept them.

I trust sir, that this matter will remain strictly confidential. I should very much hate to have any publicity given it - at present anyway

I thank you in advance for the favor of your reply.

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) William Edwin Taylor

The Kappa Alpha Psi,
110 East Burlington St.,
Iowa City, Iowa.

10 November 1921

Mr. William Edwin Taylor,
The Kappa Alpha Psi,
110 East Burlington St.,
Iowa City, Iowa.

My dear Mr. Taylor:

I have your letter of the 2nd and was very much interested in its contents. It is unnecessary for me to say that we are deeply in sympathy with you in the fight which you are making and yet we find ourselves not in a position to aid you in the way you ask.

I mean that the Board of Directors is limited by its Constitution and by its articles of incorporation in the way it can dispose of the funds entrusted to the organization. There is no way in which the Association can legally appropriate money from its treasury for the purpose of taking care of the mortgage even if it had sufficient funds to do so. I feel that your fight is one that should be taken up by all of the branches in the state since it is concerned with the State University, so I am sending a copy of your letter to the secretaries of the various local organizations urging that they take united action.

Very truly yours,

Secretary.

JWJ:LGP

F BORDWELL
PROFESSOR OF LAW

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY

Nov. 2, 1921

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Secretary N. A. A. C. P.,
New York City.

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DR. J. R. DOWELL
PROFESSOR OF LAW

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY

10618

1921

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