

Physicist Activist: Dr. Elmer Imes and the Civil Rights Case of Juliette Derricotte

Primary Source

Letter from Elmer S. Imes to W. E. B. Du Bois,
November 13, 1931

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Description:

This letter concerns the death of Juliette Derricotte and discusses her treatment following a car accident which took place on November 7, 1931. In this letter, Imes describes his impressions after visiting Dalton, GA for an article that Du Bois would write for *Crisis Magazine*.

FISK UNIVERSITY

NASHVILLE, TENN.

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

November 13, 1931

Dr W E B DuBois
69 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York

My dear DuBois:

11-27-31
I have your note of the tenth asking for personal statements from the survivors of our recent tragedy. They are Miss Miriam Price, of Atlanta, Georgia, and Mr Edward Davis, of Athens, Georgia. Miss Price is at home with a dislocated shoulder, bruises and severe shock, but I am writing to her asking that she get us a statement as soon as possible. Mr Davis has just prepared a statement which is going to the Interracial Commission in Atlanta and I will have no difficulty in getting a copy of this statement for you. I have not as yet read what he has written but if it will at all serve for your purpose, I think I shall send it rather than ask him to prepare another one. The same reason leads me to send you a copy of a letter which I wrote Miss Blanchard rather than attempt rewriting the whole thing for you. I think that I can persuade Mrs Gilbert to give you a copy of the statement which she has prepared also.

You will realize that there is a great deal of more or less futile repetition here on the campus and that distortions of all sorts are passing as facts. My attitude is that the thing is mean enough as it is without adding any flights of fancy or inference and that we should take every care that no coloring of this type enter into anything that is to be used as publicity.

There are, however, two or three things which I would like to say to you which I think have bearing.

First. Until Dr Jones returns to the campus I shall not be convinced that anything he has telephoned to people on the campus was intended as soft pedaling or white washing. I believe that his secretary does a great deal of translating and already when pinned down as to certain facts has admitted having made inferences. The only fair thing to him under these circumstances is to wait and hear what he is actually saying instead of getting stirred up over translations made by his secretary or Mrs Jones.

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Second. Since I wrote Miss Blanchard, I have received definite information that there is a good hospital in Dalton and last night Dr Steed who attended Nina Johnson in Dalton said over the 'phone that no one attempted to take them to the hospital and, when asked a second time if no attempt in so serious a case was made, said " No there is no ward----".

11-27-74
Third. While I was enormously distressed at seeing the place to which they were taken in Dalton, I was almost equally distressed at seeing the place to which they were taken in Chattanooga by a Negro Physician when he could have taken them to either of two or three first class, well equipped hospitals. This hurts and it is possible that in any controversy it may be used in an attempt to offset what was done in Dalton. Steps are being taken to have some physician inquire of Dr Patton as to why he left Dalton with the Newell Sanitarium, a first class, well equipped place, as his destination and arrived at the Walden "Hospital", a singularly unattractive, and poorly equipped place. I wonder if the answer is "race pride" and if it is I wonder what "race pride" means.

Please be very sure that I will do anything that I can to furnish you with any information you may desire and I hope that I can very shortly reassure you that there will be no attempt on the part of anybody connected with Fisk at soft pedaling anything.

Very sincerely yours,

Elmer S. Imes

Elmer S Imes

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Mrs. Gilbert is ill today but asks that you call on her for anything you want, even suggesting that she would consider writing the part of article that "no one but the Crisis would publish"!