

March 26, 1968

Dr. Ralph Gibson
1200 Newport Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Dear Ralph:

How are things going with you these days? No doubt you are at least a bit surprised to be hearing from what with my world-wide reputation to writing to my relatives let alone my friends (smile). Well, I have a need for some information and direction, and I hope you will be in a position to provide me with at least the direction if not the information.

I have a student from the state of North Carolina who came up here to Virginia to audition to study with me thinking I will or would be here next year. It turns out that this is an unusually talented young Negro baritone of 19 years of age. He has already called much national and international attention to himself through his talent by such feats as winning the Regional auditions for the National Association of Teachers of Singing Contest in North Carolina, having won a scholarship from the North Carolina School of the Arts (which is itself quite a school, sort of conservatory-like) to study the past summer in Torino, Italy, and performing quite regularly with symphony orchestras in the area as a soloist. Now, he is desirous of coming to the University of Michigan, but is on a rather generous scholarship from the North Carolina School of the Arts, without which his parents would be unable to send him. I have had him send a letter to the University of Michigan School of Music, requesting scholarship aid as an entering freshman. He received a reply stating that the time had already expired (Feb. 1) for being considered for scholarship purposes. Now my question is this:

Is there not some effort being made (with financial backing) to induce Negroes to come to the U of M who might not under normal financial considerations be able to come? And if this is so, is it likely that such a group could intercede on this youngsters' behalf, either to get a waiver of the time limit mentioned above, or to make other funds available should he be able to qualify? I had heard that there was such an effort being made on the part of Michigan Negro students, but had not heard of whether or not this applied to out-state students. In any event I figured that if such were available, the officials at the U of M School of Music might not be aware either of his race or of the availability of such efforts.

I am quite impressed both with the sincerity and the ability of this young fellow, and would figure him to be the kind of a student who might well merit some special consideration if such is available. If you should know of any possibilities available to help him obtain the aid he needs, I would appreciate your showing them this letter, and could make more pertinent information available regarding him, as well as bring him up with me on my next trip to Ann Arbor on April 8, 1968. I will appreciate whatever you can do in this instance and I am sure he will. By the way, his name is Jonny Williams, and he is located in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Sincerely,