

An open address to the Bennington College community
in the form of a letter to Dr. Murphy

October 5, 1976

Dear Dr. Murphy:

I am writing this letter to ask that you and the entire Bennington community again consider the grotesque racio-musical situation now existing in this gem of a college. A few years ago the faculty voted to accept the proposal that there be an independent Black Music division. A few weeks ago another decision, consistent as it is with the school's sense of fair play and the separate but equal status of the two music divisions, yet typical of the basic fallacy at the core of the situation, was handed down through the administration. It was decreed that each music division would have use of the carriage barn three and one half days per week. This rational decision, arrived at I know after much deliberation, soul searching, consultation with representatives from both factions, scrutimizing of statistics and logistical charts and so on ad infinitum, effectively bars certain music students from daily practice on their instruments. For a musician, nourished into growth by practicing his art, this is like being told that he have no meals Monday and Tuesday, he may eat three times the normal ration on Wednesday.

This self-created, tragi-comic dilemma with all its ramifications from here to Hoosick Falls constitutes a very real drain on the energies of "my" music division, energies vastly better spent in the service of music and education. Furthermore, the larger question, of which this somewhat minor problem is but a single example, is far from being satisfactorily decided, despite all the due deliberation, good faith, and willingness to compromise in the world. Scholars may seem to have disagreed but it remains unalterably true that apartheid is legally, morally, in every way and every place, absolutely indefensible.

Sincerely,

Richard Frisch