

Howard University

Digital Howard @ Howard University

Howard University

Oliver Otis Howard Collection

11-1-1873

Letter From Maxwell Woodhull - How to get money for HowardUniversity and address on Education of the Colored Race.

O.O. Howard Collection

Follow this and additional works at: https://dh.howard.edu/ooh_hu

Recommended Citation

Collection, O.O. Howard, "Letter From Maxwell Woodhull - How to get money for HowardUniversity and address on Education of the Colored Race." (1873). *Howard University*. 2. https://dh.howard.edu/ooh_hu/2

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Oliver Otis Howard Collection at Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Howard University by an authorized administrator of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact digitalservices@howard.edu.

Washington Nov. 1, 1873

Dear General.

Enclosed I hand you my answer to your Toledo question. "How can I get money for my university"?

I have thought much on the question of Southern education, & your University has always occupied a prominent place in its solution. I give you my plan, & an argument in support of it. It is a part of a grand scheme that I have in mind for the elevation of the whole people of the South.

If you adopt my plan, I am satisfied you will get all the money you may need. At any rate read what I have written for you with attention.

Very Truly

Maxwell Woodhull

Enc o a Hous

Washington 30 October 1873.

General O. O. Howard

My Dear General

In Toledo you asked me the question, "How can I get money for my University?"

The question and the subject were not new to me. I have watched with the deepest interest your effort to establish, on a high plane, a standard toward which the colored race should work, and by which their effort should be measured. The successful establishment of such a standard is of national importance. Its effect upon the colored race will be to bring them into earlier and more perfect relationship with the rest of the people of the country, and to fit them to enjoy in a true spirit, and with understanding, the liberty recently obtained.

No large division of our people can be left with safety to themselves; nor can a limit be fixed to the facilities for intellectual

developement, singular to any division
of our people, without danger to the whole.
You will observe that I say "without danger
to the whole", for as much danger will
come to the excluded section, as to those
who exclude them. This fact should be
borne in mind - while organized ignorance
is dangerous to the nation, the ignorance
thus organized is, if any thing, more
dangerous to itself.

It seems to me that your work
has never been rightly understood. It
has been looked on too much as the
mere establishment of another University -
a University it is true with an especial
object - but nevertheless another one of
those institutions, with high aims, small
means, and a destiny of struggling
impecuniosity, which have ~~been~~ been
the worst enemies of higher education
in the United States.

Your work is two-fold { 1. That of the Statesman
2. That of the educator,

and your success in the first, depends upon success in the second.

Your work is not merely the establishment of an institution of learning which shall graduate a given number of young men each year. It is the establishment before the eyes of the whole country, of an institution of the highest character, with a standard of education equal to that of Harvard - toward which the whole colored race of the country are working. which is to give the tone to their intellectual aspirations - which is to certify to their intellectual capabilities - and which is to demonstrate the truth that the highest mental culture is a product of education, and not an incident of race or condition.

Institutions organized merely in the interest of higher education can with safety be allowed to grow slowly and naturally. In fact such growth, if the foundations be well laid, is the best kind of growth.

Forcing is valuable at certain times,

and with certain plants, but forests do not result.

If it were given to construct a pyramid, work would scarcely be begun upon the vertex. Its foundation would first be established.

And yet you are compelled - to force - to build at once foundation and superstructure.

Here the Statesman must work along side the educator.

The educator looks alone at the manufactured article - The graduate - and his whole mind is given to the kind of product he turns out.

The Statesman holds the aim of your University to be the education of a race - He looks at the graduate as a mere incident of the process.

You are to educate by exciting the aspirations - by demonstrating the capabilities - by organizing the effort, and by giving direction to it - of a race.

The Statesman can only succeed

however through the success of the educator. The product must be, not merely good, but the best of its kind. The graduate must be the illustration of success. Your graduates, no matter how fast you turn them out can serve no other purpose. They are examples. They say to their race - "what I am, I owe to education" - "what I am, you may become through education."

The ordinary institutions of higher education deal with the individual - your University with a race by example.

Those institutions which direct their effort to the individual, may with benefit to their object, grow slowly. How different where the effort is to be directed to a race! Time is a jewel without price.

The foundations of a University are:

1st. Public opinion and cooperation.

2^d. Public confidence in success.

3^d. A system of common, or first stage schools.

4th. A system of high schools, or academies.

Then comes the superstructure of the University.

Where are the foundations of your University?

Have you the support and cooperation of the race upon whom your efforts are directed?

Have they confidence in your success? or do they even know of your effort?

Have you a system of common, or first stage schools?

Have you a system of high schools or academies?

The analysis of the conditions of success of University education measures the work before you.

You must create public opinion; win the confidence & cooperation of the whole colored race; organize the several departments of preparatory instruction; and secure for your University a corps of educators as capable as any in the country.

Too much stress cannot be laid upon the preparatory work. The success of the University depends upon the thoroughness

with which the students are prepared for its course. Rise to the contemplation of the true mission of the University and this becomes as clear as day. Realize that you are not to look to the individual, but the race - That you educate - examples - illustrations - That your graduates, measured by any other consideration, are as drops in the vast sea of ignorance which surges around you. Can I make stronger? clearer? Heartless though it may seem then; your University should separate itself entirely from interest in the individual; his education, his culture apart from himself - The capability of his race for education and culture; must alone be born in mind - The student is merely the instrument used in the solution of a problem which holds in its secret embrace the destinies of millions of our fellow creatures. Better prepare one student thoroughly for the University, and him graduate with all his faculties developed, than an hundred less highly cultured.

For the "one" may lead the nation to the recognition of the fact of the solution of the problem, and may awaken in the consciousness of the colored race a confidence in the possibility of their culture, and a desire for culture; while the "hundred" may arm those slow to believe, with arguments against the possibility of awakening the colored intellect from the sleep which now holds it enchained.

You will observe that I separate your University from all others - that I measure it by what I hold to be its mission - Race education, as distinct from individual education. And as its mission is higher, so should its standard be higher than that of all the colleges and universities below the highest. I hold that it educates by example - and that a heavier responsibility rests upon it than upon any university in the country. It is not enough that you should do well - you

Must pass to the lead - for while in ordinary instances failure presses merely on the individual, in the case of your University, failure will affect the whole colored race.

Public opinion and cooperation, and public confidence in success are essential to the success of your institution. The history of education in America sustains this view.

The pilgrims, while yet on board the "Mayflower," signed that covenant which secured to them and their descendants free government. They landed at Plymouth in the closing month of 1620 - and at once organized civil government, coming together for such purpose in town meeting. The School dates from such initial organization. The University followed the School - Harvard was organized in 1638 - In 1641 we find the colonists enacting, "if any do not teach their children and apprentices 'do much learning as may enable them to read perfectly the English language, they shall forfeit twenty shillings; and the Select-men

"of every town are required to know the
'state of the families' — and "when any
'town increased to the number of one
'hundred families they should set up
'a grammar school, the master thereof
'being able to instruct youth so far as
'they may be fitted for the University".

The present condition of education
in New England, and the culture of Harvard,
truly answer the aspirations of those
who laid so surely their foundations,
253 years ago.

Virginia received her first settlers
in 1607 - 13 years before New England -
we find no trace of orderly government
for some years after. No record of an
interest in education. No effort to
establish a college until 1693 when a
charter was obtained from William and
Mary - and no practical organization
under that charter until 1729 when the
college of William and Mary went into
operation - 91 years after the organization
of Harvard; But true University life in

Authorities.

Bradford's "Civil policy of America"

Bradford's "History of the civil war in America" Vol I.

Washington's "Voice of the Republic of the United States"

Article, in "The Atlantic" 1873 —

Virginia began much later. What can be thought of the condition of public opinion on the subject of public education when it took Jefferson forty years of contest to secure the establishment of the University of Virginia? Parton says in the "Atlantic" of this month, in his article, "Thomas Jefferson's last years", "Jefferson was forty years in getting the University of Virginia established. Long he hoped that the 'ancient college of William and Mary could be freed from limiting conditions and influences, and be developed into a true University. As late as 1820 he was still striving for a "consolidation" of the old college with the forming institution in Albemarle." and further on he says - "a competent corps of professors were engaged in England, and in March 1825 the University was opened with forty students" - 187 years after the organization of Harvard.

To what is this striking difference attributable? The answer may be found in the words of Jefferson "I have been long

'sensible', he wrote in 1826, "that while
'I was endeavoring to render our
'country (i.e. Virginia) the greatest of all
'services, that of regenerating the public
'education, x x x x I was discharging
'the odious function of a physician
'pouring medicine down the throat of a
'patient insensible of needing it."

The public opinion of Virginia, and
of the South, had never taken form in
support of education - and without the
support and cooperation of public opinion,
and without public confidence in the
success of an educational movement,
all effort will wear itself out; and
out-right failure, or a lingering struggling
life, be the result.

You may build a house for a
man, and he will live in it - but to
live in education, man must rear
his own structure - else it becomes
a prison; and those who build must
force him in, and bolt the doors lest
he return to freedom and ignorance.

"Harvard" was organized because the people felt that they needed it - "Williams and Ellery" was organized because it was felt by others that the people needed it. Harvard was lived in.

Those who organized Williams and Ellery forgot to stand on guard.

Harvard has given direction to the course of preparatory instruction; organized the educational effort; and given tone to the intellectual aspirations of New England - and now finds herself surrounded and supported, by schools, academies and colleges that represent the culture of America.

What has Williams and Ellery done for the cause of education in the United States?

The condition of education in the South is a sad answer to the question.

Without a sustaining public opinion, without a public belief in success - no educational effort can succeed. No matter how well the plan be laid; no matter how pure the motives may be of those who complete the organization; no

matter how great the enthusiasm may be with which they undertake the task - failure - although temporarily delayed - must come. History teaches the lesson.

The mind evolves an idea - ideas are not forced from without upon the mind.

Invention is the result of the same mental process - no outside influence can force the mind to invent.

Yet outside influences may furnish the data from which the mind evolves the idea - and the impressions which lead to invention.

Harvard was organized because the people for whom it was intended felt that they needed it.

Your University was organized because it was thought by others that the race for whom it was intended needed it.

The problem is to place it where Harvard stands, and save it from the fate of William and Mary, so that it may give direction to the course of

preparatory instruction, organize the educational effort; and give tone to the intellectual aspirations of the colored race.

You have begun as "William and Mary" began, from without. The condition of success is that the effort be changed to one from within, outward.

The question at issue is = Home? or Prison? =

The conditions under which your organization was had, demanded that what was done, should be done. Before the colored mind could evolve a system of education; before invention could create; that mind had to be awakened by influences and impressions from without - Your University is that awakening influence. The time has come for its passage from that condition to a higher and stronger life.

It is without a sustaining public opinion. without a public belief in its success. without the support and cooperation of those for whom it is organized - And - if we may find a tracing of the future in the teachings of the past, we may read failure as its fate unless those conditions shall be changed.

You have drawn your support from
without the colored race. That race
must now take the burden on their
own shoulders. Your means have
been furnished by your friends in the
North, henceforth the means for the
support of the University must come
from the colored race.

It may be said that they are
poor — are they as poor as were
the pilgrims when first landed from
the Mayflower? —

— That they are laborers — are
they in any other sense laborers than
their white fellow citizens, who yearly
push out into the new territories; organize
societies, and lay the foundations of a
complete system of education?

— That they cannot set aside from
their wages the sum demanded by
the University —. Ought not the
example of the poor of Catholic countries,
and the members of that church in our
own, shame such an assertion & silence? —

— Can there be a grander work than that of Education for them to engage in?

— Can there be a more thorough way of arousing their interest in the cause of education than by going to each individual for his cooperation in the establishment of a grand Central University, toward which in all time the eyes of his race may be turned as the beacon light, to guide all seekers in the true path?

— Can a grander monument be reared by the race in commemoration of their freedom and citizenship than the establishment of a University for the organization and direction of their education, and the cultivation of the highest intellectual aspirations of their race!

If your work were merely with the individual, you might still go to the people of the North for assistance - but the mission of your University is race education by example, and you must base your effort on the support of the race to be educated.

Your work is a great one. It is not alone the building up of a University - but the organization of preparatory and higher instruction. You have not the future to work in but the present.

You must do now, what in a similar work the country has taken two centuries to do.

Your preparatory work must be done as thoroughly as your University work, and by a school the counter-part of the Phillips' Academy of Exeter. and your University must take a place along side of Harvard.

You have their example to guide you; you have their excellence as the standard for your own.

There must be no question as to the fitness of your professors. They must be appointed because they are the best for the place. They should, if possible, be men of national reputation.

For the immediate accomplishment of so grand a work you will require

large sums of money. When general interest is awakened in this work, when each one of the four millions of colored people in the country can say, "this is my work", you will have all the money that may be needed; and by the awakening of this interest in your work you will have already carried your University along way upon its road of race education.

The fact that they have been combined from one end of the country to the other, and have poured out their means in support of an institution that is to guide and systematise their effort for education, will of itself be an education, and will bind them to the cause in its lower as well as its higher branches, and the fruit will be, the increase of interest in the common schools of the country. From this interest will spring,

Public opinion & cooperation = Public confidence in success = A system of common, or first stage schools = and a system of high schools or academies = which

we have found to be the foundations of the University.

The time has come when the colored race must help itself. If the race be worthy of freedom and citizenship they will gladly embrace the opportunity of self-help.

Your question in Toledo was —
"How can I get money for my University?"

My answer is — Go to the colored people of the country. Tell them of the work you are doing for them — and invite their cooperation.

Let their offering take the shape of a memorial commemorative of their freedom and admission to citizenship — and let its dedication be held on the centennial of the nation's birth.

Let this memorial be the creation of a grand endowment fund for the University, and let it be the offering of the colored race of the United States. Let no one hold back.

Let it come from the young and the old -
from those in the North, and from those in
the South.

Why should not this endowment
fund amount to four millions of dollars? (\$4,000,000)

By the Census of 1870 we find that
there were in the United States, 4,880,009-
colored persons. A subscription of $\$1 \frac{00}{100}$
each would give you \$4,880,009#.
This return includes the young and
the old, infants, and those just closing
life; but if the subscriptions be taken
by families - and if those able to do
so, give more than the regular subscription,
giving according to their means, and
with the enthusiasm that should be
awakened by the cause and object of
the subscription; I can see no reason
why the average should not be made
good if not exceeded.

The success of the scheme will
depend upon the thoroughness of the
organization - and the belief that the
fund subscribed will reach the

intended destination; and for all time be held sacred for the object of the subscription.

The plan of organization should be —
— a central committee: to be composed of leading colored men, who should associate with themselves the President of the University, and the Secretary of the Treasury.

— That the Secretary of the Treasury should be the Trustee of the fund for its investment in the five per cent (5%) Bonds of the United States, [no other investment of the fund to be allowed] and that said bonds be registered in the name of the Memorial fund of Howard University —

— That the central committee's office should be in the city of Washington.

— That the country be divided into districts; and the districts into sub-districts with appropriate committees, each reporting through its superior committee to the central committee at Washington.

— That the 'Freedmen's Savings Bank' and its branches be the depositories of subscriptions up to a certain amount, and

Whenever the funds reach that amount, that they be sent to the Secretary of the Treasury for investment in 5% Bonds -

--- That all such deposits be held by the Bank and its branches, and so entered upon its Books, as special deposits.

--- That the Committee - Subscription agents, the Bank, and all engaged in the work serve without compensation, and that all unnecessary expenses be avoided, and that the Churches, Schools, the Bank, and the University furnish Committee rooms, Meeting Places, Clerks &c -

--- That an address, setting forth the object of the Subscription - That the money raised shall be held for ever in Trust by the United States Treasury for the object of the Subscription, and that only the interest thereon shall be expended for the uses of the University - and giving detailed instructions as to organization of the business of Subscription - be prepared and published to the colored people of the

United States.

— This address should state the amount to be raised - viz \$4,000,000+, and the exact proportion to each man, woman, and child in the United States; and the minimum subscription that each should make — all who can afford to subscribe more than the minimum should be urged to subscribe to the extent of their means.

— A scheme of checks on subscription agents should be devised, and the Central Committee should publish from time to time the amounts received.

On the 4th of July 1876, with appropriate ceremonies, the fund should, in the name of the colored people of America, be dedicated by the General Committee to the glorious cause of education.

When this shall have been done, you may look upon your services in the cause of freedom and education as having received the

recognition and grateful acknowledgment
of four millions of your fellow creatures,
and may even taste in advance,
some of the joys that only come to
those, after leaving this world, whose
names are carried by fame through
the ages.

Believe me, My dear General
Ever your friend
Shapwell Woodhull
