

May 20, 1970

MAY 21 1970

TO: Dr. Homer W. Shamp, Jr.
Vice Chancellor

FROM: Abraham Fox *AJ*

SUBJECT: Classroom disturbance

On May 19, 1970, at 12:15 pm. about 12 to 15 young men and women burst into my classroom (Room 101, Faculty Building) and attempted to take over the accounting class (Econ. 0122) and conduct a discussion on the murder of the two Jackson, Mississippi, students. I asked the group to leave the classroom so that we could continue our classwork in accounting. The group refused to leave and several of them began to harangue the class.

In order to prevent what appeared to be leading to a confrontation, and I felt that an expression from the class might convince the group to leave. Accordingly, I asked the class for their views. Only one, a black student, indicated that he would like to have a discussion on the Mississippi murders. The other students solidly and strongly indicated that they wanted to continue the classwork. I then asked the group to respect the wishes of the students and to leave the room. Most of the group refused to leave. I then insisted that the group respect the wishes of the students and promptly leave. Also, by this time the entire class told the group to get out and allow them to continue their classwork. One of the group standing in the middle of the room made a provocative remark which infuriated a member of the class. As both men rushed towards each other to exchange blows, I ran inbetween them (and in front of another member of the group who rushed to participate in the exchange of blows) and prevented any violent occurrence.

I insisted that the group leave--and--told the class if anyone wished to have a dialogue on the Mississippi murders, ^{he or she} could leave with the group. The group then started to move out saying that they would return at 12:50 when class ended. Not one member of the class left the room.

In leaving the room, the same member of the group who previously made provocative remarks did so again. Again, the same class member rushed out of the room to exchange blows and once again I placed myself between them and brought the accounting student back to class. When I came back to the room, two members of the group were attempting to set up a dialogue in the class. I insisted that these two leave immediately which they did saying that they would be back after class ends.

I instructed the students to keep calm and not to be provoked and also not to lower their standards and principles. We continued our classwork without further interruption until 12:50⁰⁰ when a member of the group opened the door. I told him we were not finished and would continue for a minute or more. He quietly closed the door. A few minutes later another member of the group opened the door and I told that member to keep out, we were not finished. The door was quietly closed. I dismissed the class about 12:55 pm. Not one member of the class remained to have any discussion with the group which entered the classroom after class was dismissed.

I could not tell whether the group consisted of students or nonstudents or a mixture of both. It appeared to me that the group intended to provoke the students into a possible physical confrontation which could have resulted in injury to persons and damage to property. The group appeared to have been taken aback when the class almost solidly indicated it wished to continue the classwork. It was after the class indicated its preference that the strongest provocative remarks were made by the group.

Again, my primary concern was to prevent a physical confrontation. I felt that the solid demonstration by the class students of their desires helped prevent what could have been violence.

cc: Dr. David H. Lewis