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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 20, 1982


Dear Vic:

In case you did not get it, here is
a copy of the release on Meharry.

What do you think of the compromise?

Thanks for your help.

cordially,



Morton C. Blackwell
Special Assistant to the President
for Public Liaison

Dr. Victor Braren
Vanderbilt University
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Victor Braren, M.D.

Pediatric Urology

June 9, 1982

Mr. Morton C. Blackwell
Special Assistant to the President
Room 191
Old Executive Office Building
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

*Draft + note
+ send him
list of vets
1.57 c. 155.*

Dear Morton:

Attached is a copy of an article of yesterday's evening paper which is of obvious interest to you. Has your office come across any national veteran groups who are knowledgeable of this controversy and/or are they making their positions known thereon?

As you may know, (or conceive from this newspaper article) the White House Task Force is scheduled to be in Nashville this upcoming weekend. The itinerary has not been released but word has it that they will, at least on this visit, only be meeting with Veterans Hospital physicians and touring the veterans facility.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank you very much for spending some time with me relative to this matter and likewise for forwarding to me copies of material which you had. Carolyn was most cooperative and if you wish, pass on from me a word of commendation for her.

My interest in this matter are multifaceted: firstly, wanting the President to do what is best for all parties concerned and for the Administration to at least have all the material on hand before a decision is made; secondly, as an informal arm at Vanderbilt, helping our Administration do what is best for our interests; and assuring that Veterans, for whom Vanderbilt has provided health care for many years, are dealt with in the highest manner.

I would like to keep in touch with you relative to this matter, especially now since veteran groups are involved. Conversely if I can assist you further in any way, either providing information or performing some liaison task, do not hesitate to contact me.

My best personal regards.

Sincerely,

Victor Braren, M.D.
Associate Professor of Urology
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics

VB/kc
Enclosure

"An Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity Employer"

Veterans unit opposes VA-Meharry link

By Bill Snyder
Banner Medical Writer

The president of the Veterans Coordinating Council here said today he was opposed to a proposal that would give equal access by Meharry Medical College to the Nashville Veterans Administration Medical Center.

In other action, the Meharry National Alumni Association has asked the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to investigate "possible racial inequities" in the running of the VA hospital since it was established in the late 1940s.

Officials of the defense fund said today no immediate legal action was contemplated but said they are trying to find out Meharry's legal rights to share medical staff positions at the VA hospital equally with Vanderbilt Medical School.

Currently, Vanderbilt faculty and resident physicians dominate the hospital's medical staff under an affiliation agreement dating back to 1947.

"There seems to be, subject to investigation, a disparate treatment of Meharry and Vanderbilt which warrants taking a look at it," said Jack Greenberg, director counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in New York.

Napoleon Williams, assistant Legal Defense Fund counsel, said that if a federal task force currently studying the access question is unable to come up with a solution for sharing the VA hospital, "it would show there would be a need for legal relief."

However, Williams said whether legal action was filed in that case would depend on whether Meharry can prove its le-

gal rights to a share of the hospital.

Hilrey Love, president of the council which represents 8,000 veterans in Davidson County, said his group opposes Meharry's proposal because "the care is just not as good" when doctors from two medical schools serve in the same VA hospital.

"This is the only thing we are concerned about — the quality of care for the veterans hospital," Love said. "We're not politicians. We're just trying to look after the veterans."

"The only reason the hospital exists is to take care of disabled veterans," he said. "It looks to me like Meharry is in trouble financially and they are trying to bail them out at the expense of the veteran."

Love said he had not been invit-

ed to meet with representatives of a federal task force on Meharry who are scheduled to hold a "fact-finding" tour in Nashville Thursday and Friday.

Purpose of the two-day tour, which will include meetings with officials from Meharry, Vanderbilt and the VA hospitals in Nashville and Murfreesboro, is to provide information to the task force, commissioned last month by the White House to help resolve the access issue.

The task force will be represented in Nashville by Dr. Robert Graham, task force director and an official of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; John Murphy, general counsel of the Veterans Administration; Dr. Earl Brown, deputy chief VA medical director; and Isabel Dunst, HHS.

HHS NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, June 25, 1982

Claire Dorrell - (202) 245-6343

Statement by
Richard S. Schweiker
Secretary of Health and Human Services

I am pleased to announce today that President Reagan has ordered action to help Meharry Medical College achieve self-sufficiency.

Meharry, founded in 1876 in Nashville, Tennessee, has played a unique role in American medical history.

It is one of only three institutions dedicated to the training of black physicians. Indeed, more than 40 percent of all black physicians in the United States were trained at Meharry.

Historically, many of its students have come from families with disadvantaged economic backgrounds. Its graduates have established a strong record of practicing primary care medical specialties where they are desperately needed: in areas of physician shortages, particularly areas with high minority populations. Meharry's existence as a predominantly black medical school poses a unique set of complex financial challenges today. President Reagan personally directed that his administration help Meharry face those challenges so it could continue its historic service to America. This is consistent with the President's Executive Order of last September, directing additional federal support for historically black colleges and universities.

At the President's direction during the past month, an interdepartmental task force, formed by the Cabinet Council on Human Resources and consisting of representatives from the departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Justice, The Veterans Administration, and the Office of Management and Budget, has been studying possible ways to deal with the public interest at stake in Meharry's situation.

Earlier this week, task force recommendations were sent to the President.

Today, I am announcing that we will implement the President's decision to assist Meharry in fulfilling its medical training mission by putting into effect the following recommendations:

Access to Veterans Administration Resources

The Veterans Administration will move expeditiously to expand the existing affiliation between Meharry Medical College and the Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Veterans Administration Hospital. This will provide, over the next one to three years, an additional 100 to 200 teaching beds in internal medicine and surgery.

This action will both expand the resources in the mid-Tennessee area for providing services to veterans, as well as provide Meharry with an expanded educational base for its medical student and housestaff training programs.

Hubbard Hospital

The Department of Health and Human Services will seek to arrange to pre-pay the outstanding balance of the loan under which Meharry's Hubbard Hospital was financed with an HHS loan guarantee.

Interim Arrangement for Increased Clinical Teaching Resources

Along with the above federal initiatives, Vanderbilt University has indicated its willingness to enter into discussions with Meharry Medical College, with members of the Meharry Task Force as participants, related to providing interim access to Vanderbilt educational programs for a number of Meharry housestaff and medical students.

The effort to assist Meharry Medical College is not solely a federal responsibility. The President strongly urges and expects the appropriate state and local officials, as well as the private sector, to fully cooperate in this undertaking. He is also confident that the medical community will use its resources to participate in and further this common endeavor.

The administration will continue to encourage local interests in the Nashville area, working with Meharry, to provide expanded access to other local clinical teaching resources that may be available, through private and public institutions.

I want to stress that these actions will bring together a cooperative effort involving all three levels of government: local state and federal. Ultimately, Meharry's ability to stand on a firm financial footing, independent

of special federal support will depend on continuing cooperation on the state and local levels. There is certainly reason for optimism, based upon the voluntary spirit along these lines that has been evident thus far.

Meharry Medical College has faced formidable financial challenges. Considering the unique contribution Meharry has, and continues to make to the health care of the Nation, particularly to minority and disadvantaged Americans, the President believes the public benefits of the plan we announce today will be substantial and lasting. His action offers this historic and vital medical training resource a realistic chance to survive and continue its special service to the health needs of the United States.

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