

Sidney Poitier

*The Herbert Lehman Education Fund
111 East 42nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10017*

November 18, 1969

Dear Friend:

For many eager black students across the South, securing a grant from the Herbert Lehman Education Fund is the only hope for a college education. When Lemuel E. Lewis applied, he wrote:

"I have completed three years at the University of Virginia, taking 18 hours a semester and working two jobs. I made the dean's list, but it was not easy. I am writing you now because my mother--who has supported our family of five since my father was disabled--has been laid off her job. I have tried the banks. They say that money is too tight. Please, if I don't get some help I will not be able to finish."

Lemuel Lewis received a Lehman scholarship and will graduate with his class. But, he was among the lucky few. Because Lehman Fund money is very limited, we have had to turn down 312 qualified applicants this year. For them the chance of a college education is just one more dream gone dead.

For the black community, the students who were turned down have an even more tragic meaning. In 1969, as in the past, only a fraction of those who have the potential to be the doctors, the educators, the businessmen, the lawyers--and the political and civic leaders of tomorrow--are being given the chance.

What these young men and women ask is very little. Our grants, supplementing whatever the student can earn or get from other sources, average just \$800 a year. A gift of that amount makes it possible for us to take one more student. A gift of \$3,200 underwrites a four-year college course. Every gift, of whatever amount, helps us fulfill hopes.

The Herbert Lehman Education Fund was established by the Legal Defense Fund in 1964 to stimulate a flow of Negro students to state-supported institutions of higher learning formerly restricted to whites. We have made a start: a few Negro students are enrolled in every state university. But, so far, it is a trickle, not a flow.

The students who ask us for assistance want an education for themselves, but also--and they express this thought repeatedly--they want to use their skills to help build a life open to meaningful and full participation for everyone in their Southern communities.

Will you join with me to give them this chance? No gift is too small. Whatever you give, you help us avoid the bitterness of denial to someone whose eagerness can mean a better America for all.

Sincerely,



Sidney Poitier

Sidney Poitier
Honorary Vice Chairman

Enclosures