

*The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON Papers*

From James Earl Russell<sup>1</sup>

New York May 4th, 1901

My dear Mr. Washington: In reply to your letter of the 27th inst I want to extend to you a very hearty invitation to spend a day or two with me in order that we may go over the ground covered in your letter more thoroughly. Please let me know when you are coming to the city so that I can arrange to be as free as possible at the time.

Meanwhile, however, let me say that I was intensely interested in your work. It is certainly a great inspiration to anyone to see what you have accomplished in the past 20 years and to note how excellent is the foundation which you have laid. The industrial side of your work appealed to me very strongly. You certainly have fine ideas of what to do and how to do it, and I want to add my testimony to the many congratulations you have justly deserved from this work.

There are, however, some phases of your work which did not impress me so favorably. Your academic work is certainly considerably behind the industrial; not that you have poorer teachers necessarily, because you have some very excellent teachers in this department, but rather because of a lack of coördination and of adaptability to the needs of your pupils. You have, as most schools have, a good many teachers who do not know how to teach, but what is the more noticeable is the fact that you apparently have no one who is able to bring these poorer teachers up to a satisfactory standard and to harmonize the work of all departments in such a way as to make it efficient. You need a strong organizer in this department who shall know his trade as thoroughly as the men do who are responsible for your industrial department.

As for your normal department, I think that is very bad. When I get the chance I want to tell you how I think you can apply in this work precisely the same ideas you are using in your trade work. The art of teaching must be acquired by your teachers in precisely the same manner as the art of blacksmithing. You do not ask your blacksmith apprentice to rely exclusively upon a few lessons in the class room, nor are you satisfied with his skill as a mechanic after sending him to the shop to observe the work of some one else. No