

Negro Physicians
SCHOLARSHIP

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PHILADELPHIA, PA.

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Dr. M. O. Bousfield,
Associate Director
The Julius Rosenwald Fund,
4901 Ellis Avenue,
Chicago, Ill.

My dear Dr. Bousfield:

Your letter of June 25th sounds most discouraging to me, especially since it comes two days after the receipt of a friendly encouraging letter—entirely non-committal however—from a member of your Board of Trustees who suggests that there is possibly a better chance for me to obtain a grant as a result of some new policy that the Board has laid down. One situation puzzles me greatly, viz. my application was written and sent to the Rosenwald Fund on September 17, 1935; since then I talked public health and consumers' cooperative to two people who I feel quite sure had not conceived the idea of study in either of these fields and who had not at that time applied to the Rosenwald Fund for a fellowship or grant. Since then these two people, and I think a third person that I talked with and have been in communication with, have received grants from the Rosenwald Fund. I sent my application to Dr. Embree because he and Mr. George Arthur had given me encouragement in the summer of 1934 and had advised me that some of the very limited funds reserved for medical work might be deflected to me if my project warranted it. I knew that Mr. Arthur was no longer on the staff of the Fund, and I knew no other member of the staff. I had no choice but to wait on you and your advice and I could not look for other aid for next year's work so long as your Fund held my application and could not consider it until July. The puzzle is, therefore, how is it that applications coming after mine could be granted so easily and so quickly while mine must wait ten months to be presented to the Board of Trustees.

My one purpose for studying public health at Yale University is to create in North Philadelphia where there are some 80,000 Negroes, 42 Negro physicians, no hospitals providing adequate nor sufficiently sympathetic attention for Negro patients, and no facilities for the Negro physician of the community, a Community Public Health Center which will serve physicians and the lay citizenry. This will be a whole-time position which I cannot embark upon until I have broken from general practice and have absented myself from the community for a year or more. I am not sure that this work must be initiated through the local, state or federal public health system.

Following your instructions, I have spent a great amount of time trying to learn the system and the situation in Philadelphia and in the entire State of Pennsylvania. Mayor Wilson of Philadelphia is at the moment most embarrassed because he promised to appoint a Negro public health official and because there is not a man nor woman in Philadelphia who is qualified to

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accept an appointment. In New York a similar situation exists and I understand New York physicians are opposing the appointment of a Negro who does not belong to the State of New York even though they have no one who is qualified for public health work in their state.....I suspect I shall abandon my comfortable Socialist berth and get on the band wagon for Mr. Roosevelt and the Democratic Party, with the view to get for the people of Pennsylvania some of the facilities which should be theirs through the medium of the Social Security Act. Dr. Dexter, Pennsylvania State Secretary of Health, tells me that Pennsylvania will receive the greatest proportion of any state in the Union and that none of it will be spent per se for the training of Negro physicians or the establishment of health facilities in Negro communities. How can the Negroes of Pennsylvania get what is due them unless they have trained people to put into jobs after they have fought for appointments?

I do not see how I could have the promise of a public health position at this moment because I have not yet accomplished my work at Yale and no one knows just what the political situation will be in Republican Philadelphia and in this state which has been, until recently, invariably Republican. That I shall have a full time position, however, I can assure you for I shall work for the end I have described to you with all of my time though my salary may be but a dollar a year. With the freedom from general practice, I can get the interest of private funds for the establishment of the community project. I so much want to be free to work "as way opens," as is the manner of Friends. I am not going into this work, Dr. Bousfield, because I will it. I could be very comfortable in private practice; and I am leaving my practice at the moment when it promises to grow easily for at least a decade or two to come.

I am actually forced to follow the course which I have described to you and I am counting on the Julius Rosenwald Fund to support me in my effort. I have already written for my dormitory reservations at Yale and I shall post my bond with them tomorrow. I have surmounted what seemed to be impossible difficulties in getting my admission to their school of public health.

You must surely be able to put this request of mine through if you will!

Very sincerely,

Virginia M. Alexander

Virginia M. Alexander, M. D.

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