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# A Doctor's Letter to His Son

This letter was recently written by Dr. Paul William-son, a McComb, Mississippi, physician, to his son who was about to enter Tulane University in New Orleans. It was subsequently published in Practice, Dr. William-son's medical newsletter.

Dear Nathan:

Of course, you know that your mother and I love you deeply. There are limits to that love. Let me discuss one with you today.

You are going to Tulane. We are proud and happy for you. There are, however, awkward things that must be discussed. College kids over the nation are "protesting."

They use many beautiful phrases. What it often amounts to is a contest with the duly constituted authorities of the United States Government. The only term that could apply is revolution. People are quite rightly shot in revolutions.

I suppose there is the legal differentiation between a peaceful demonstration and breaking windows. One graduates into the other by such indifferent degrees it is difficult to say where one ends and the other begins.

The duly constituted authorities have been merciful beyond belief—far too merciful, I think—with students. Obviously, this patience is nearing an end. Snap, I have seldom heard of a student being shot at his study desk. When he goes in the open and contests the ground with the National Guard, he may very likely be shot—and very rightly.

Let us take, for example, the sweet little girl in Kent, Ohio. I feel nothing but sorrow that a beautiful young girl of great mental attainments be killed. Yet, Snap, if she had been studying—doing what her parents were paying for her to accomplish—would she have died?

She was helping contest the ground with duly constituted U.S. authorities. In this case, I back the U.S. I think it rather remarkable that they didn't shoot 200 more. In this case, the girl was a revolutionary and she got exactly what a revolutionary should expect.

The same, Snap, would be true of you. If you care to challenge the U.S. Government, this is your affair. If you get killed doing it, this is your affair. You see, there are constitutional ways to change the U.S. Government and I agree that it desperately needs changing. However, if you chose to try to change it by revolution,

expect to get shot. Mother and I will grieve but we will gladly buy a dinner for the National Guardsman who shot you. You see, son, they pretty-up in definition all the things you might want to do. When brought to its basics, it is still just revolution.

I am sorry for the colored boys who were killed at Jackson. But, son, I know a lot more about this than will ever be printed in national news media. There was sniper fire the night before as well as the night the police fired back.\* The students were given 15 minutes warning to clear the area before the police fired. I thought the duly constituted authorities were most gentle to take only two. If you take part in something like this and get shot, Mama and I will still back the U.S.

It may sound like great martyrdom to give your life for an ideal. Indeed, it may be when you are old enough to judge ideals. Trying to whip the National Guard or the Army appeals to me as damned foolishness. Snap, I have been shot and it hurts like hell. It's funny, but you don't think of ideals over the pain.

Now use your head, son. Remember this country is getting tired of student demonstrations which lead to revolution. The National Guard can shove in a couple of clips and clean Tulane. I think they ought to when students disturb the peace and destroy property.

One thing of which you have probably not thought: Tulane is a non-profit corporation belonging to the public which means one brick is yours. The National Guard is a public organization which means that one bolt on one rifle may have been paid for with your tax.

It seems awfully foolish for you to pay for the bolt that snaps the cartridge home which kills you. It seems even more foolish to tear down the bricks you own.

When I went to Oklahoma City University, I always thought of it as my university. Ann and I probably own one bit of cement between the bricks. Believe me, sir, I was very careful of that bit of cement.

I, too, had ebullient spirits but I used them for more practical purposes.

Have you ever considered how many co-eds there are to be kissed? This is a much more worthy purpose than absorbing a bullet and not nearly so painful.

Think of these things.

Love,  
Dad

\* Four students were killed, two boys and two girls, none of whom was a radical or revolutionary. The girls were Sandra Lee Scheuer, who "was on her way to speech therapy class with a friend, Sharon Swanson, when they were caught up in the gunfire," and Allison Krause, "whose friends said she was on her way to class" and who did not drop to the ground fast enough when the Guardsmen opened fire. (NYTimes, datelined Kent, 6 May 70.)

Miss Krause was "an innocent bystander who had telephoned her parents a short time before to express disapproval of the demonstration ... on the campus." (SPExaminer 5 May 70.)

\*\* Investigation by The President's Commission on Campus Unrest, and by the FBI, found no evidence of sniper fire.