

STANFORD UNIVERSITY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

March 3, 1967

TO ALL STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing to you out of a deep concern for the preservation of free and civilized debate on the Stanford campus.

There has been considerable discussion and disagreement among the University community about what actually happened following the program in Memorial Hall in which Vice President Humphrey spoke. I have waited for full reports from my staff, based on a careful canvass of many witnesses, before undertaking to do more than to apologize to the Vice President for the incident.

While no complete consensus is likely concerning such an episode, I believe that the following facts are established:

1. Inside the auditorium a high standard of decorum was maintained despite the strong feelings of some members of the audience; the walkout of 240 people, while debatable as a gesture of protest, was carried out quietly and with minimum disruptive effect upon the proceedings.
2. There was no unusual delay in the Vice President's departure. A voice over a loud-speaker urged listeners to block his departure and a crowd did converge on his limousine as it moved away but arrived too late to impede its progress. Two persons were removed from the Vice President's path between the time he left Memorial Hall and the time his car was in motion. Given these facts, it is evident that some of the initial news accounts were overdrawn and in consequence evoked exaggerated responses. Even so, there is widespread agreement among eyewitnesses that there was a threatening degree of anger among many in the crowd. Shouts of "murderer," "shame," "get him" and the like, hard elbowing and other physical acts among those rushing toward the car occurred on a scale which justifies serious concern.

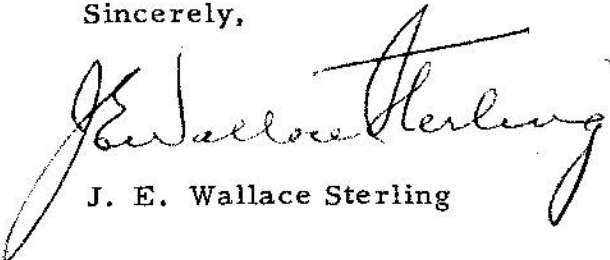
We are fortunate that nothing more happened on this particular occasion. From the relatively small numbers involved, in what the New York Times

described as "a scuffle" after the meeting, we can take some encouragement: the overwhelming majority of the Stanford community rejects violence as a means of argument, and does not regard mob scenes as permissible incidents on a University campus. This attitude also has been expressed publicly since the Vice President's visit by many members of the faculty. But it remains a ground for serious concern that we should have fallen even this far from our tradition of fair and free discussion, and, further, that perception of the danger has not been universal among our community. The ease with which a crowd, in the sway of strong emotion, can become transformed into an ugly and dangerous mob — dangerous as much to innocent bystanders or to its own members as to anyone else — has apparently been overlooked by a disturbingly large number of people.

I ask each one of you to consider this question: If Stanford University cannot provide assurance, not only of courtesy but of basic physical safety, to visiting speakers, no matter how controversial their subject and opinions, can we in conscience continue to invite such speakers to the campus? I trust that for you, as for me, merely having to consider such a question is intolerable. The basic purpose of the University would be in jeopardy if intimidation or obstruction were permitted to threaten fair discussion.

I want to express my resolution to ensure that intimidation or obstruction will not be tolerated. And, I would emphasize that public reports to the effect that no disciplinary action will be taken (in the face of adequate evidence supporting such action) are grossly mistaken both in this situation and others that may arise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J. E. Wallace Sterling". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

J. E. Wallace Sterling

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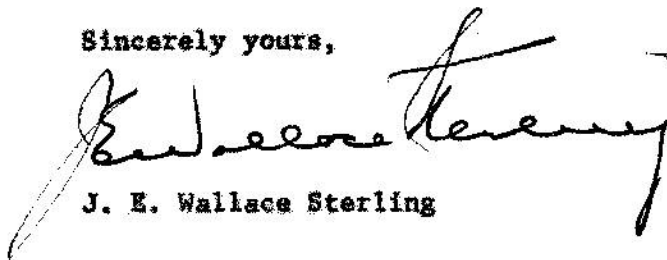
March 14, 1967

Dear Miss Hanson and Messrs. Neugeboren, Siegel and Tobin:

I have your letter of March 9th.

My letter to the students, faculty and staff, dated March 3, makes clear my view of the events during and after Vice President Humphrey's appearance at Stanford. For further enlightenment as to Mr. Humphrey's views, I can only suggest that you address yourselves to him.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. E. Wallace Sterling". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

J. E. Wallace Sterling