

January 18, 1965

Mr. W. Harold Ford  
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction  
Fairfax County School Board  
1400 Jones Street,  
Fairfax, Virginia

Dear Mr. Ford:

I enjoyed our recent meeting and conversation about the Folklore Society of Greater Washington, and wanted to thank you for writing, for your help and interest. I also wish to apologize for my re-arranging of headquarters done by my boys, and I hope our visit didn't disturb your office routine too much.

I thought you might be interested in having a copy of the Society's January newsletter to file with the other material I gave you at our meeting; I also offer it as proof that the organization is still functioning, and, hopefully, expanding. I included several extra copies of the printed poster, which accompanies the newsletter this month, in case you would like to post them on bulletin boards or pass them on to interested parties.

This month's program should be of special interest locally, because John Jackson, whom we are featuring along with two other Washington area musicians, has lived in Fairfax City for the past 15 years. He and his wife, Gena, and seven children live in one of the oldest houses in Fairfax, on University Drive behind Fairfax Christian School. He has worked as a caretaker for several notable families in the Fairfax area, as a janitor in several local buildings, as a gravedigger and at numerous other odd jobs in the area. During these 15 years, however, few people outside his immediate family and friends have known that he is also a very excellent singer and blues guitarist, in the style of the great, traditional bluesmen of the 20's and 30's.

It was a very interesting coincidence that at the time we were organizing the Society, and discussing the fact that many collectors spend much time going "off to the country" to collect traditional music and generally ignore what is right under their noses, that my husband should stumble into John with his guitar in a local service station. This incident simply adds more strength to my own personal conviction that there is much within our culture to be collected, recorded and preserved for the future right within our own area, if we only make the effort to look for it.

I have been making an effort to contact Dr. Johnson whom you referred me to, however, I have been unable to reach him by phone thus far. I feel that in his capacity with the Cultural Committee, he is in a position to be very helpful to us in regard to basic organizational problems, such as obtaining authorities, publicity, distribution, etc. I feel it would be mutually beneficial to co-ordinate some of our efforts, and intend to write him a letter in this regard, perhaps enclosing much of the same material that I presented to you. I want to thank you again for this reference.

I have been proceeding rather slowly in contacting schools and presenting your letter for several reasons. First of all, I didn't have any posters or items of interest to post, however, I got a group of Woodson and Marshall students together in my home this last Sunday for the purpose of making posters. We had some discussion about what they would like to see happen in a youth group associated with the Society. There seemed to be much interest, although they also felt that there would not be enough interest in this type of activity in any one school to support a group. So it is basically a problem of reaching the interested parties in many schools in the area and co-ordinating them; to this end I would like to have permission to contact Madison and Marshall if you would be so kind as to permit it.

Another reason for my proceeding slowly in this matter, is the fact that I am not able to represent the Society in an official capacity at this time, however, various members of the Society are interested in the area of work with youth and feel that it is within the scope of the Society to sponsor an affiliated group of young people. The most urgent need at the moment is to present a suggested program for such a group including specific possibilities, to the Executive Board for approval. There is a meeting of the Board this evening and I intend to present the areas I have investigated for their deliberation.

In the meantime, there is another project relating to the Society that I should like to have your opinion about and that is as follows: the Society has an immediate need for an insignia, emblem or whatever to be used on stationary, membership cards, etc. The idea of sponsoring an open competition in the area schools to produce a suitable design for this emblem has been suggested with an appropriate prize awarded for the winning design. This would entail and require a fair amount of research on the part of the students to decide upon an appropriate symbol to represent the Society, taking into consideration the stated purpose of the Society in its By-laws and also the broad meanings of the term, Folklore. The symbol would also have to be historically valid, which would make research a necessary requirement also. Would it be possible or feasible to present such a competition as a part of course work in Art classes, as an extra-curricular activity, or do you feel it would be too much of a "misuse factor" to even attempt to introduce the project in the schools. I am most anxious for your advise in this matter, and assure you that I could not and would not make any attempt to breach this subject to the schools without your recommendation and approval of the proper authorities.

I hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience and again, I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

W. Charles H. Redue, Jr.