

Monday, June 1, 2020

Jerry Falwell Jr.  
Office of the President  
Liberty University  
1971 University Blvd  
Lynchburg, VA 24515

Dear President Falwell,

We are all African-American Evangelical pastors, ministry leaders, and former athletes who are alumni of Liberty University, and we are grateful for our college experiences. These experiences have shaped us in deep and profound ways and have equipped us to engage our local context with the Gospel of Jesus, both thoughtfully and unashamedly. The school's mission is to educate and train champions for Christ to impact the culture, and we believe the objective has been achieved for many years. While we rejoice in God's grace in advancing this mission, we, however, have been disappointed and deeply grieved by your incendiary rhetoric over the past several years.

The latest example is your May 27 tweet of a face mask with an image of two people, one in a KKK robe and hood and one appearing in blackface. While your tweet may have been in jest about Virginia's Governor, it made light of our nation's painful history of slavery and racism. It is what we're called to reject as followers of Christ - "*Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place...*" (*Ephesians 5:4, ESV*). The reckless nature of this tweet is a microcosm of the past several years of divisive rhetoric that does not display the kind of Christian witness that the Gospel demands of us, nor does it represent the Christlike leadership that Liberty University deserves. It has brought further disgrace to Jesus Christ and Liberty University.

For several years, you have said and defended inappropriate statements that represent Liberty and our faith very poorly. You have belittled staff, students and parents, you have defended inappropriate behaviors of politicians, encouraged violence, and disrespected people of other faiths. We were all taught at Liberty about the sanctity of life (*Jeremiah 1:5*) and the dignity of every human - made in the image of God (*Genesis 1:27*), and yet, you have repeatedly violated and misrepresented this core principle (*Romans 12:9-21*) through brash tweets and statements that harm our Christian witness.

While students, professors, and alumni have urged you to alter your rhetoric and repent, sadly nothing has changed. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that Liberty University is a family-owned organization and you are the sole authority. The Board of Trustees has no power to influence your behavior or hold you accountable. So, the objective of this letter is to appeal to you and your spiritual conviction.

We are writing to urge you to stop this infantile behavior and lead our alma mater with dignity as your father did. Jerry Falwell Sr was more focused on preparing the next generation to courageously engage the culture as "*ambassadors for Christ*" (*2 Corinthians 5:20*). He wasn't

perfect, but he was humble enough to confess ungracious and unbiblical comments, and apologize when he was wrong. The KKK robe and hood and blackface face mask tweet may seem funny to you, but this tweet is the action of a political commentator or activist and is not fitting nor acceptable for the leader of one of the largest Evangelical Christian schools in the world. A review of your social media and statements during your presidency would lead many to believe that you care much more about politics than Jesus Christ, evangelism, and the discipleship of students. It has become obvious to many that your heart is in politics more than Christian academia or ministry, so we would encourage you to leave the position of school president and pursue politics full-time.

Your statements hurt the ability of Liberty alumni to obtain jobs and have a voice in the culture. Having the school's name on a resume can be a liability to many of our graduates. As much as you say that your statements and activism do not reflect the mission, values, faculty, staff, students and alumni of the Liberty University as a whole, this is a misguided position because everything you do and say is a reflection of Liberty University, whether you want it to be or not. You are the president of a Christian university with a platform of great influence and you have the unique responsibility to steward that role in a way that honors God first and foremost.

Lastly, we leave you with this. Because of your callous rhetoric, we can no longer in good faith encourage students to attend our alma mater or accept athletic scholarships. There are many Christians of color who worship in our churches and communities; we will not recommend their attendance at L.U. as long as you continue the unChristlike rhetoric. We will no longer donate funds to the university. We will also actively encourage Christian leaders to decline the invitation to speak at Liberty if you continue to insist on making unChristlike and inappropriate statements that are misrepresentative of Biblical Christianity.

In closing, we ask you to withdraw your racist tweet immediately and make a public apology. If you decide to stay at Liberty, this coalition stands ready to meet with you in order to provide counsel on ways for L.U. to best move forward in these racially-charged and divisive times. Liberty University deeply impacted us as students and we hope that you can return to a focus of training "young champions for Christ" with Biblical conviction and Christlike character and humility. Our ultimate goal is for Jesus to be glorified in all that we say and do. We pray that is your desire as well.

In His grace,

*Dr. Chris Williamson (Strong Tower Bible Church, TN), Class of '90 & '92*

*Pastor Eric Carroll (The Ascension Church RVA, VA), Class of '91*

*Eric Green (former NFL player, Liberty University Hall of Fame), Class of '90*

*Pastor Eric Saunders (McLean Bible Church, VA), Class of '07*

*Walt Aikens (NFL player, football student-athlete), Class of '14*

*Latasha Morrison (Founder, Be The Bridge), Class of '13*

*Minister Myles “Mac” Lawhorn (Epiphany Fellowship Church, PA), Class of ‘00*  
*Obehi Idiake (Christian speaker, podcaster), Class of ‘14*  
*Minister Maina Mwaura (author, speaker), Class of ‘97*  
*Pastor Marcell Howard (Woodhaven Bible Church, MI) Class of ‘03 & ‘10*  
*Lezlyn Parker (author, speaker), Class of ‘89*  
*Richard Shelton (former NFL player, football student-athlete), Class of ‘89*  
*Khambrel “Kham” Rembert (Christian musician), Class of ‘17*  
*Pastor Gavin Davis (McLean Bible Church, VA), Class of ‘06*  
*Patrick Nelson (former NFL player), Class of ‘92*  
*Dorena McFarland Williamson (author, speaker), Class of ‘91*  
*Dr. Johnny Parker (author, speaker), graduate student ‘05*  
*Dr. Joy Hervey (author, speaker), Class of ‘18*  
*Johnny T. White (H.S. Coach, football student-athlete), Class of ‘93*  
*Shomari Dixon (ministry leader), Class of ‘19*  
*Wayne Haddix (former NFL player, football student-athlete), Class of ‘88*  
*Rev. Brian D. Woolfolk (First Mt. Zion Baptist Church, VA), Class of ‘92*  
*Minister Tiffany Croom, Class of ‘13*  
*Shelton Lewis (football student-athlete), Class of ‘93*  
*Carroll L. Ward (football student-athlete), Class of 90*  
*Pastor James Hobson Jr. (Hill City Community Church, VA), Class of ‘11 & ‘17*  
*Curtis Artis (Christian nonprofit leader), Class of ‘91*  
*Keith Vinson (football student-athlete), Class of ‘91*  
*LaTasha Washington (Christian counselor), Class of ‘16*  
*Allan Louder (basketball student-athlete), Class of ‘91*  
*Dr. Andre Sims (Christ the King Bible Fellowship, WA), Class of ‘88 & ‘91*  
*Pastor Jua Robinson (Charles River Baptist Church, MA), Class of ‘04 & ‘05*  
*Joshua McMillion (Christian musician), Class of ‘17*  
*Pastor Marion Mason (former LU Assistant Track Coach), Class of ‘06*  
*Corey Rice (football student-athlete), Class of ‘93*