



JAMES E. CLYBURN  
ASSISTANT DEMOCRATIC LEADER  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sixth Congressional District  
South Carolina

October 28, 2016

Dear Colonel Alexander:

Congratulations on your commemorate of the 50th anniversary of the integration of The Citadel Corps of Cadets. I was privileged to have the first African American cadet, Charles Foster, as a student in my World History class at Charles A. Brown High School in Charleston.

I got to know Charles very well. In addition to being a conscientious student of mine, he and several of his classmates, formed a social club which they named, "The Corsairs Club," and flattered me by requesting that I serve as their faculty advisor. At our once-a-month meetings, we explored the world together, the potentials and limits of our shared universe. We discussed world events, and I soon learned that these young men had a clear and unshakable view of their future and the role they intended to play in making the world a better place. They were serious about life and determined to forge a world that looked beyond the traditional boundaries and limitations as defined by racial prejudices and social conditions.

In addition to bearing, with grace and intestinal fortitude, all of the abuses that were normally heaped up all Citadel "knobs" back in 1966, Charles Foster bore additional abuse reserved for only black pioneering students during that challenging period of our sometimes sordid history. Some of the stories he told me about his experiences at the Citadel were things that I as a teacher and advisor, adequately prepared him for. In fact, I am not at all certain, that I or any of his teachers could have. I am certain, however, that Charles's tolerance was born of the huge reservoir of internal strength and self-worth I had seen in him as he interacted with his schoolmates in the Corsairs Club.

Sadly, Charles Foster's life story did not have a happy ending. He died in a tragic house fire under questionable circumstances. In my memoir, *Blessed Experiences: Genuinely Southern, Proudly Black*, I wrote "I can still picture him striding proudly down Rutledge Avenue, head held high, in his Citadel uniform. I was proud too."

When the Citadel established a scholarship in his honor, I was pleased to deliver the address that commemorated the occasion. Hopefully, future cadets will remember the example he set for courage and forbearance. As for me, I will always remember the great promise he showed in those Monday night meetings of the Corsairs Club and the dignity he often displayed, especially when wearing the uniform of a Citadel cadet.

Sincerely,

James E. Clyburn  
Assistant Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives