

22 April 2021

Stephanie Cole, Ph.D.
Associate Professor & Associate Chair; M.A. Graduate Advisor
The University of Texas at Arlington
History Department
Box 19529 – 201 University Hall
Arlington, Texas 76019

Dear Dr. Cole:

Please accept this letter of recommendation on behalf of Regina L. Burns, who is applying for admission into the Ph.D. program in History at the University of Texas at Arlington. I have known Regina for more than thirty years, and I have the greatest admiration and respect for her and what she has accomplished in both academics and the field of journalism. Based on what I know about her, I can recommend her highly and without reservations.

I met Regina back in the late 1980s, when I was an Assistant Professor in Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University. She was in the midst of a burgeoning journalism career at the time, and I was teaching and doing research in cultural and religious history, with a special focus on Martin Luther King, Jr., civil rights history, and the interface between liberal Christianity and American political life. I quickly discovered that Regina and I had a shared interest in Dr. King, the history of the civil rights struggle, and the larger fields of American history and culture. She interviewed me on Dr. King's thought and significance for American history during our very first meeting in Memphis, and from that point we continued what has become a serious and enduring conversation around the meaning of the King legacy and the unfolding of a range of social justice concerns in our nation's history.

Regina has a deep and abiding interest in American history, and especially African American history. I sense from our conversations that her interest in these fields extends back to her undergraduate years at Abilene Christian University, where she took three courses in American history, one of which focused exclusively on social and economic history. Regina informed me that she performed quite well in these courses, and that they had a lasting impact on her. "These courses gave me a deeper understanding of U. S. history and the role history plays in society," she said in a conversation I had recently with her. She went on to say that "they contributed to my present focus on history and African Americans in Texas."

Although Regina has spent decades working in journalism, she has never really lost touch with the academic life. She completed the requirement for and received a graduate level degree in Journalism Administration at Memphis State University, and contemporary events in American history figured to a great degree in her training. She has had some teaching experience. She taught a news writing class at Richland College in Dallas, and she received rave reviews from some of her students. Regina has maintained that special feel for the academic life, and I believe she is ready to take on the challenges and demands of graduate work at the Ph.D. level.

Regina and I have talked at great length about her interest in pursuing a Ph.D. in History at the University of Texas at Arlington. I really pressed her on the question of engaging in such an academic pursuit and what that would mean at this time. She told me about Henry Miller Morgan and his establishment of

branches of Tyler Barber College, the first such institution in the country, in Texas in the 1930s, and of her determination to study and expose the richness of his life, work, and contributions. Regina is convinced that through this kind of ground-breaking academic work, she can make a significant contribution to African American history and the larger fields of American history and culture. She also feels, and I fully agree, that the University of Texas at Arlington would provide the ideal academic setting in which to pursue her academic interests.

In short, Regina would be a great fit for the Ph. D. program there at the University of Texas at Arlington. She is very mature and self-confident, and she has a great work ethic and an unwavering desire to achieve excellence in her academic work. She is an excellent writer, and she delights in rigorous research and in the free play of ideas in any setting, and I think she would bring these qualities to her work in the classroom. Also, her excitement about the possibility of pursuing Ph.D. work at the University of Texas at Arlington is evident to anyone who speaks with and listens to her.

On a more personal level, Regina is a delight to know. She is kind and sensitive, and she relates well to people, irrespective of their backgrounds or stations in life. She also has a keen sense of moral and spiritual values. In fact, she combines outstanding personality and impeccable character with a strong intellect and a deep desire to find a special place in, and to make her own unique contributions to, the academic life.

Again, I support Regina's application with the greatest of confidence and enthusiasm.

Sincerely,

Lewis V. Baldwin
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