Very sincerely yours,
Martin L. King, Jr.
MLKmlb
TLc. MLK-MBU: Box 27.

To C. Kenzie Steele

19 March 1960
[Atlanta, Ga.]

On 20 February eleven Tallahassee demonstrators were arrested and charged with disturbing the peace for protesting at a local chain store. After Judge John Rudd ordered the protesters to either pay a $300 fine or serve a sixty-day jail sentence, eight of the eleven elected jail. Two days after the verdict, King sends encouragement to the eight students via SCLC vice president C. K. Steele, whose sixteen-year-old son Henry was among those jailed.

REV. C. K. STEELE
(FOR 8 JAILED STUDENTS)
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

I HAVE JUST LEARNED OF YOUR COURAGEOUS WILLINGNESS TO GO TO JAIL INSTEAD OF PAYING FINES FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS PROTEST AGAINST SEGREGATED EATING FACILITIES. THROUGH THIS DECISION YOU HAVE AGAIN PROVEN THAT THERE IS NOTHING MORE MAJESTIC AND SUBLIME THAN THE DETERMINED COURAGE OF INDIVIDUALS WILLING TO SUFFER AND SACRIFICE FOR THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM. YOU HAVE DISCOVERED ANEW THE MEANING OF THE CROSS, AND AS CHRIST DIED TO MAKE MEN HOLY, YOU ARE SUFFERING TO MAKE MEN FREE. AS YOU SUFFER THE INCONVENIENCE OF REMAINING IN JAIL, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT UNEARNED SUFFERING IS REDEMPTIVE. GOING TO JAIL FOR A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE IS A BADGE OF HONOR AND A SYMBOL OF DIGNITY. I ASSURE YOU THAT YOUR VALIANT WITNESS IS ONE OF THE GLOWING EPICS OF OUR TIME AND YOU ARE BRINGING ALL OF AMERICA NEARER THE THRESHOLD OF THE WORLD’S BRIGHT TOMORROWS.

1. At a 17 March hearing Rudd gave the demonstrators a thirty-day suspended sentence and placed those attending Florida A&M University on probation for one year or until graduation ("Tallahassee Sitdown Sentences Are Suspended," Miami Herald, 18 March 1960).
2. The other students who chose jail with Henry Steele were Priscilla G. Stephens, William H. Larkins, Clement C. Carney, Angelina Nance, Barbara Joan Broxton, John A. Broxton, and Patricia G. Stephens, who later remarked: “We strongly believe that Martin Luther King was right when he said: ‘We’ve got to fill the jails in order to win our equal rights’” (Stephens, "Letter from a Jailed Student," CORE-lator, April 1960; see also “8 Florida Negro Demonstrators Choose 60 Days in Jail over Fines,” Washington Post, 19 March 1960).
“Revolt Without Violence—
The Negroes’ New Strategy”

21 March 1960
Washington, D.C.

In this interview for U.S. News & World Report, King predicts that the sit-in demonstrations, which had spread to more than thirty southern cities, will extend beyond dining facilities. He stresses that no organization planned the protests; rather, they were “spontaneous” and “initiated by students,” who then “asked for the advice and counsel and direction from organizations and individuals who had been more experienced in this area.” King further claims that earlier protests, such as the Montgomery bus boycott, had influenced the students: “I am sure that many of the forces of history and many things that have happened in the United States at least inspired these young people to start them, because they had been hearing about nonviolent resistance.”

Q: Dr. King, is the protest movement of Negroes in the South going to continue and grow greater?
A: I can say this—that the Negro is no longer willing to accept segregation in any area of life, whether it’s in public eating places; whether it’s in public transportation; whether it’s in public schools. There is a strong revolt against the whole system of segregation on the part of Negro people all over the South and all over the nation.

It is natural and possible that this movement will go beyond eating places. For the moment it is being centered on eating places—and I’m not saying that it will go into another area the next week after we’ve finished working in this area.

But I do feel that, ultimately, the movement will dramatize the problem of segregation in every area and any other areas with which we are confronted.

Q: What would you say is the basic purpose of this campaign?
A: Well, the real purpose is to use a creative method to achieve full citizenship rights for the Negro people of the United States.

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1. In an earlier letter to a supporter, King accused the magazine of having a racially biased editorial slant: “It has proved to be anti-Negro through and through and seeks to play up the ideas that are quite precious to the segregationists in the South” (King to Shirley A. Livingston, 30 May 1959).
2. King’s interview was preceded by a photo essay that included remarks about race relations in Montgomery from SCLC secretary-treasurer Ralph Abernathy, Alabama governor John Patterson, and Montgomery Advertiser editor Grover C. Hall, Jr.