"To the Citizens of Montgomery"

27 January 1956
Montgomery, Ala.

After the settlement was exposed as having been contrived, the city commissioners toughened their stance against the boycott by refusing to negotiate and initiating a campaign of police harassment. On 23 January, after announcing that all three commissioners had joined the pro-segregation Citizens Council, Mayor Gayle accused the MIA and the boycotters of stirring up "racial strife."¹ A few days later, responding to the heated rhetoric, the MIA and several other organizations published this conciliatory advertisement in the Montgomery Advertiser.

On December 25, 1955, there was released through these columns a document from the Negro Citizens of Montgomery explaining the reasons the protest had been staged.²

Since recent public pronouncements have attempted to cloud and distort issues in the protest, we feel that further explanation is needed.

Negroes want the entire citizenry of Montgomery to know that at no time have we raised the race issue in this movement, nor have we directed our aim at the segregation laws. We are interested in a calm and fair consideration of the situation which has developed as a result of dissatisfaction over Bus policies.

The protest, which has been a non-violent method of bargaining, has been used in a democratic society to secure redress of grievances. This technique, however, has caused some of the leaders of the city to reject unrelated issues—such as "destruction of the social fabric" or "the southern tradition," which we feel is an effort to evade the real issues involved.

1. RACE RELATIONS: We have used the non-violent approach and have sought relief for our complaints within the framework of the law. We deplore any attempt to pit one race against the other. And we are amazed that there are among us those who could impute any sinister motive other than the request submitted to the Bus Officials and the City Commission. We believe that our proposals, if considered fairly, will help to improve race relations in Montgomery.

2. DEMOCRACY: As we interpret the democratic way of life, we are convinced that it gives to each Citizen equal opportunities and privileges to enjoy the benefits of what ever service he is able to pay for, so long as he does not infringe upon the rights of others. Under the present policies of the bus company the rights of Negroes have been infringed upon repeatedly. Up until now our proposals have not been given fair consideration. We have no alternative, therefore, but to continue the bus protest until something fair, just and honorable has been done in our behalf.

¹ Quoted in "Mayor Stops Boycott Talks," Montgomery Advertiser, 24 January 1956.
3. THE CHRISTIAN WAY: We live in a Christian community in which brotherhood and neighborliness should prevail among all the people. We can only rely upon these principles to guide those in authority and other people of influence to see that the Christian way is the only way of reaching a satisfactory solution to the problem.

We submit this to all the Citizens of Montgomery in the name of Him who brought Peace on Earth and Good Will to All Men.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
NEGRO MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS

BAPTIST MINISTER'S CONFERENCE
THE REV. H. H. HUBBARD, PRES.

METHODIST MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE
THE REV. W. J. HAYES

INTERDENOMINATIONAL MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE
THE REV. L. R. BENNETT

MONTGOMERY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION
DR. M. L. KING, PRES.

CITIZENS COORDINATING COMMITTEE
RUFUS LEWIS

PD. Montgomery Advertiser, 27 January 1956.

To Roy Wilkins

28 January 1956
Montgomery, Ala.

King sends Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP, this form letter of appreciation. Wilkins had sent a $500 contribution from the NAACP to the MIA.¹

¹ Someone in the NAACP office noted on King's letter that $500 had been sent to him on 17 January 1956 via Ruby Hurley, the NAACP regional secretary based in Birmingham. Roy Ottaway Wilkins (1901–1981) was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. While earning his B.A. (1923) at the University of Minnesota, Wilkins joined the NAACP. After graduating Wilkins spent