24 Feb 1956

The second reason for this letter is this, I would like to have you for our Annual Youth Day speaker on June 17, 1956. My twin daughters, Ruth and May, have been urging me for several weeks to extend to you this invitation. For years we have had some of the most outstanding men of the nation, such as Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, President of Virginia Union University and others. I sincerely hope you will see your way clear to accept our invitation.

I wish to assure you that the honorarium will be worthwhile, all expenses amply taken care of, plus a generous donation to be used as you see fit.

Your father and I have been friends over the years, and your mother and my wife were at Spelman together. I believe also, that you and my son Samuel, who is now pastoring in Providence, Rhode Island, were in Morehouse College at the same time. Kindly let me hear from you by return mail.

Yours in Christ,

[signed]

W. H. McKinney, Pastor

WHM/IR

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 116.

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3. Virginia Ruth McKinney (Henderson), a graduate of Spelman College, studied for her M.A. at Boston University during the same time King was completing his doctoral work. She and Mary McKinney (Edmonds), also a Spelman graduate, had been impressed by the sermons they heard when King served as an occasional guest preacher at Morehouse Chapel between 1949 and 1953.


The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

From Peter A. Bertocci

24 February 1956
Boston, Mass.

Bertocci, Borden Parker Bourne Professor of Philosophy at Boston University, commends his former student's "fight for greater justice."

Dear Martin,

Paul Deats has been telling me about the kind of witness you have been giving to your conviction—of which I have been reading also in the newspapers. I was

1. Paul Deats, Jr. (1918–), was an assistant professor of social ethics and religious higher education at Boston University, having just received his Ph.D. at the university in 1954.
so glad to see that someone was speaking to destroy bitterness at the very moment when it can be allowed to swell beyond any possible good purpose. I have just returned from a student conference in Mississippi and am distressed by the way in which the attempt to do good can destroy good and discourage steps toward improvement. Because I realize more than ever how difficult it is for the Christian to witness most effectively, I want to tell you how humble I feel about even writing this note—which is simply to say that I pray that you may continue to know the best way to take in your situation as you try to guide in the fight for greater justice.

Cordially,

[signed] Peter A. Bertocci

ALS. DABCC.

From Kelly Miller Smith

25 February 1956
Nashville, Tenn.

Smith, pastor of Nashville’s First Baptist Church, praises King’s leadership and encloses a biographical sketch for his appearance as Youth Day speaker at Dexter on 11 March.

Dr. M. L. King
454 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear “Mike,”

Although I can’t for the life of me see how you will have time to do anything with it, here is the “immodest” sketch you requested.

Your contribution to our fare in America is rare. Not as an NAACP executive but as a Gospel minister you are doing these things. The mantle of the prophets rests well upon your shoulders.

We are trying to have an affair at our NAACP Branch meeting Tuesday night to help out the cause there in Montgomery. You will be hearing from us soon.

We bid you God’s speed.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]
Kelly Miller Smith

KMS:meb

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 119.