

25 Apr
1956

To William Peters

25 April 1956
[Montgomery, Ala.]

King offers corrections to a draft profile by Peters, a freelance journalist, to be published in Redbook. King explains to Peters, "I did not say that the economic boycott can never be used as a weapon by the Negro . . . [but] it can be used if the proper conditions bring it about and the community situation is taken into consideration." Peters incorporated the majority of King's comments but chose to retain King's earlier characterization of the boycott as a religious movement, not an economic one. Peters's article remains an important source for tracing King's intellectual development. King explained to Peters, for example, that "the spirit of passive resistance came to me from the Bible, from the teachings of Jesus. The techniques came from Gandhi."¹

Mr. William Peters
921 Grant Avenue
Pelham Manor, New York

Dear Mr. Peters:

Thanks so much for your thoughtfulness in sending a carbon copy of your article for Red Book. Absence from the city has delayed my reply. I see you work very fast. The article is certainly an excellent one and I am sure that it will be welcomed by the American public. It is set forth in a very lucid style and the contents reveal a real grasp of the total situation.

I have noticed just a few minor things that need to be worked. The first is found on page thirteen. I feel that this paragraph should be deleted because it doesn't adequately express my feelings at this point. That is to say I don't feel that all white churches follow an empty pattern of ritual. That might be misunderstood by many. The second is found on the bottom of page fourteen. There were six Negro students at Crozier and about eighty whites. The next is found on page twenty. Instead of saying hundreds of Negroes were assembled at the jail, I believe it would be better to say "there were numerous or a large number, because I don't think the number went up into the hundreds. The next is on page twenty-three, the second paragraph. Maybe I didn't clearly express my views on that point. I did not say that the economic boycott can never be used as a weapon by the Negro in the struggle for justice. It seems to me that it can be used if the proper conditions bring it about and the community situation is taken into consideration. I would not, however, advocate the indiscriminate use of the boycott in cases, for instance, where counter boycotts can upset the total economic struc-

1. William Peters, "Our Weapon Is Love," *Redbook*, August 1956, pp. 42-43, 71-73; see also Peters to King, 16 April 1956. Peters (1921-), born in San Francisco, received his B.S. (1947) from Northwestern University. After working on the staff of several magazines and as a freelance journalist, Peters produced documentaries on race relations for CBS television during the early 1960s.

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ture of the Negro. I would agree that in the South there are not many areas where the boycott can be applied. However, there are communities in the South where the Negro wields a great deal of economic influence and power. In these cases boycotts can be much more effective than in poorer communities.

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Thanks again for your thoughtfulness. I'll be looking forward to the publishing of this article with great anticipation. It was a real pleasure meeting you, and I hope that at a very early date we will be able to renew this great fellowship. When I am in New York I will be sure to look you up.

With warm personal regards, I am

Cordially yours,
M. L. King, Jr.,
President

MLK:b

THLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 64.