It is the word “maladjusted.” This word is the ringing cry of the new child psychology. Well, there are some things in our social system to which I am proud to be maladjusted and to which I suggest that we ought to be maladjusted.

I never intend to adjust myself to the viciousness of lynch-mobs. I never intend to become adjusted to the evils of segregation and discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to the tragic inequalities of an economic system which takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes. I never intend to become adjusted to the madness of militarism and the self-defeating method of physical violence.

History still has a choice place for those who have the moral courage to be maladjusted. The salvation of the world lies in the hands of the maladjusted. The challenge to you is to be maladjusted; as maladjusted as the prophet Amos, who, in the midst of the injustices of his day, could cry out in words that echo across the centuries, “Let judgement run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream;” as maladjusted as Lincoln, who, about a century ago, had the vision to see that this nation could not survive half free and half slave. As maladjusted as Jefferson, who, in the midst of an age amazingly adjusted to slavery, was maladjusted enough to cry out in words lifted to cosmic proportions, “All men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The world is in desperate need of such maladjusted persons. It is only through such maladjustment that we will emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of “man’s inhumanity to man” to the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice.

PD. Socialist Call 24 (June 1956): 16–19; copy in MLK JrP-GAMK: Box 107.


To Arthur R. James

1 June 1956

[Montgomery, Ala.]

King belatedly answers a 29 March letter from James, pastor of Central Baptist Church and president of the United Baptist Convention of Delaware. James had written on

1. Arthur R. James (1887–1972), born in Balcarres, Jamaica, did his undergraduate work at McMaster University in Ontario and received his master’s degree from Crozer Theological Seminary. In 1931 James became pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church in Wilmington, Delaware, and also headed the Wilmington branch of the NAACP. He helped found Central Baptist Church in 1943, where he served until 1962. James also presided over the United Baptist Convention of Delaware and served as a trustee of the Delaware Baptist Convention. In 1959 James became the first black city magistrate in Delaware’s history.
behalf of the Interdenominational Ministerial Union of Wilmington, Delaware, and Vicinity, which comprised all the black churches in that area, to inquire how they could best aid the MIA. He asked whether the state of Alabama might prevent the MIA from using donations by outside groups and whether boycotters in Montgomery had suffered from economic reprisals and needed special assistance.

The Rev. Arthur R. James, Pastor
Central Baptist Church
1215 Tatnall Street
Wilmington, Delaware

Dear Rev. James:

After going through the stack of mail, I discovered a letter that you wrote to me on March 29, 1956. Please let me apologize for just answering this letter. We have had to move our office four times within the last three months, and I am sure that your letter was misplaced during this period of moving. Please know that my failing to answer your letter immediately was not due to sheer negligence but to the inevitable pressure of an involved situation. I was very happy to know of the interest taken by the Interdenominational Ministerial Union of Wilmington and vicinity in our struggle for justice. I can assure you that such moral support and Christian generosity give us renewed vigor and courage to carry on.

Funds are still coming in for our cause and so far we have not had any difficulty in using these funds. The state has not tried to block them to this point. Most of our money is deposited in out-of-state banks and it would be difficult to block that money anyway. So far the economic conditions of Montgomery are holding up very well. We do not have evidence of many reprisals on the part of white employers seeking to undo the economic structure of the Negro community. We have had only minor cases of Negroes losing jobs as a result of the boycott. Most of the funds that we use are for the operation of the transportation system and the office. This local operation runs approximately five thousand dollars ($5,000.00) a week. So you can see that this is a very expensive venture.

I hope that this will answer your questions in some way. We will be getting a newsletter out within the next few days, and I am sure that this will clear up additional questions that you might raise. I will be sure to place your name on the mailing list.

Again let me express my appreciation to you and the brethren for your interest and your sincere concern in the cause of justice.

With every good wish, I am

Yours very truly,

M. L. King, Jr.,
President
MLK:b

TLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 15.