To Dwight D. Eisenhower

27 August 1956
Montgomery, Ala.

Two days after Montgomery minister and MIA executive board member Robert Graetz's home was bombed, King and other Montgomery black leaders initiated correspondence with the president, urging him to order an investigation of violence by white supremacists acting with the complicity of local public officials. Presidential assistant Maxwell M. Rabb acknowledged their letter on 25 October 1956; Department of Justice officials responded on 7 September.¹

The President of the United States
Honorable Dwight D. Eisenhower
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Honorable Sir:

Continued threats, violence which has included bombings of homes on January 30, February 1, and August 24, 1956; the hangings in effigy of a Negro and a white man who "talked integration," and mass arrests authorized by city and state officials against Negroes, have tended to deprive Negroes of their civil rights and have left them without protection of the law here in Alabama.²

Public officials are members of White Citizens Councils whose purpose is to preserve segregation by economic reprisals against Negroes. These officials are doing nothing to prevent the violence. In fact, according to the local press, the Montgomery Journal (a copy of which is included), the city police of Montgomery led the procession to the downtown public square when the effigies of the Negro and white man were hanged by a number of white men, some of whom were members of the White Citizens Councils. The effigies were allowed to remain there for over an hour before the mayor ordered them removed. Not one arrest was made in the case, yet there is a law against putting up signs of any kind in the downtown area. (Newspaper pictures of the demonstrations and bombings are included).

As a result of the last bombing of a minister's home, the mayor attributed the incident to a publicity hoax on the part of Negroes to revive interest in the local Negro bus boycott against city transportation lines for abusive treatment.³ (A fed-

¹ See pp. 364–365 in this volume.
² They refer to the bombings of the homes of King, E. D. Nixon, and Robert Graetz, respectively.
³ Gayle reportedly called the bombing "a publicity stunt," adding, "It seems strange that none of the occupants have been at home when other bombings have occurred" ("Graetz Denies Bomb Hoax," Montgomery Advertiser, 26 August 1956).
eral suit contesting the constitutionality of segregation laws on public intra-state transportation is at this time before the Supreme Court of the United States.) The “don’t care” attitude of public officials toward such violence is manifesting itself throughout the city and state and encouraging hoodlums to continue. If something is not done to put a stop to it, further violence can be expected.

Hundreds of Negroes are being arrested daily on trumped-up charges and fined. The revival of the Ku Klux Klan is a constant threat and the robed members are allowed to demonstrate in the city without police interference whatsoever.

Thousands of Negroes in the city of Montgomery and the state of Alabama are deprived of their rights to vote, on the grounds that they “cannot successfully pass the test.” As a result, unscrupulous men get into office on platforms of racial hate and provide no protection or justice for the minority race.

We, therefore, urge you to use the power of your office to see that the proper investigation is made in Montgomery and Alabama to the end that justice and law will prevail.

Respectfully yours,

[signed]
The Montgomery Improvement Association,
Reverend M. L. King, Jr., President
(50,000 members)
[signed]
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters,
E. D. Nixon, President
[signed]
Inter-denominational Alliance,
Elder E. H. Mason, President
[signed]
Citizens Educational Committee,
Rufus Lewis, President

cc: U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell

THLS. WCFG-KAbE.

From Cecil A. Thomas

28 August 1956
Berkeley, Calif.

Thomas was one of Coretta Scott King’s teachers in Marion, Alabama. As an administrator of the Stiles Hall University YMCA in Berkeley, he arranged King’s appearance there on 15 May. Thomas reports on his efforts to build support for the bus