Reverend M. L. King, Jr., President
The Montgomery Improvement Association
530 South Union Street
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Reverend King:

This acknowledges your letter of August 27, 1956 with respect to alleged threats and violence directed against Negro citizens of Montgomery, including the bombings of certain homes on January 30, February 1, and August 24 of this year. Your letter also states that thousands of Negroes of the State of Alabama are being deprived of the right to vote because of their race.

The information concerning the alleged violence, the activities of the White Citizens Council and the local officers, does not appear to indicate violations of federal criminal statutes. We are concerned however, with the statement concerning the alleged denial of the right to vote on the ground of race or color. If you know of specific instances of this, and will furnish us with full information concerning the same, you may be assured that it will receive prompt and careful consideration.

Sincerely,
WARREN OLNEY III
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

By: [signed]
ARTHUR B. CALDWELL
Chief, Civil Rights Section

TLSr. MLKP-MBU: Box 66A.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

From C. W. Kelly

8 September 1956
Denver, Colo.

In an 18 July letter Kelly, pastor emeritus of Tuskegee's Greenwood Missionary Baptist Church, had characterized King's leadership as a "missionary journey akin to Paul's of old." He added that "Paul never did it more effectively." Writing the day after King delivered "Paul's Letter to American Christians" to an audience of ten thousand at the seventy-sixth annual meeting of the National Baptist Convention in Denver, Kelly

1. Charles W. Kelly (1887–?), born in Columbia, Tennessee, received his B.A. from Fisk University in 1913. After graduating from Oberlin Theological Seminary he became pastor of Tuskegee’s Greenwood Missionary Baptist Church in 1920, serving there until his retirement in 1953. He was active in the Tuskegee Civic Association and its several precursors. Kelly was close to Vernon Johns and other Dexter pastors.
praises King's performance. J. Pius Barbour also described the address in glowing terms: "Of course the center of attraction was THE KING. Never in the history of the Baptist Denomination has a young Baptist preacher captured the hearts and minds of the people as has young King. He just wrapped the convention up in a napkin and carried it away in his pocket." Coretta Scott King sang at the gathering, and Alberta Williams King participated as organist for the Woman's Auxiliary. King responded to Kelly on 19 September, noting that "I always accept your compliments with profound gratitude and great humility."

My dear Friend, M. L:—

This brief word to say again how much I appreciated your message to the N.B.C. yesterday—It was indeed a masterpiece. You could hardly have improved on it. Your deliberateness, and calm dispassionate appeal to the very best in your huge audience, endeared you to their hearts with spiritual "hoops of steel." You will never be forgotten. The impression is everlasting. You spoke as a prophet and seer which you are—The imaginative "Letter from St. Paul" to American Xns was as vivid and real as any of the Pauline Epistles. You read the Epistle well, and be assured it will be "passed on to the churches," as the preachers will be talking about it always. Your emphasis on American Xns making little moral progress on their material progress, allowing their minds to outrun their hearts re—

How right you were in your Epistle that they "were afraid to stand alone, and to be ostracised, capital's misuse of capitalism and their love of money, etc root of all evil re. How often have I stressed to my people their great error of "making a living instead of a life" I said just today, "If the white man was as smart in his heart as he is in his head, how much better off our world would be. The real body of X, the church, "has no disunity." The 256 denominations belie this fact. But we must have unity if not uniformity. And, on and on your Epistle rang true with truth, which gave it "power unto salvation" to your believing hearers. You may not have known it, but many, myself and others, along with Marshal Shepard wept like babies, and couldn't help ourselves, nor did we try. My, boy, God used you because you can be used by Him—and like Joseph, God is with you, because you are with God. 

Keep on keeping on and may God bless and keep you Ever.

Sincerely
Yours + His
[signed] Chas W. Kelly

P.S. I was so happy, too, to hear your wife sing so feelingly.

ALS. MLKP-MBU: Box 66.