had spoken at Hampton Institute, that I was able to eat. After getting on the plane I discovered that there was no food there. I had left home very early without eating breakfast. By the flight being three hours late, I had to go directly from the airport to the platform to speak. It was that night after speaking that I had my first meal for the day. As you can see this was a tragic inconvenience. I think it is an excellent case for a suit.

Now I am sure that there is a question of witnesses. I talked with several of the waiters. All of them happened to have been colored. They gave me the impression that they would willingly serve as witnesses if a case came up. I don't have all of the names but you can contact the following two waiters and they will be very happy to refer you to the others who were present at the time: Mr. Claude Marshall, Dobbs House Number 2, The Atlanta Municipal Airport, Atlanta, Georgia. The head waiter who carried me to the back compartment to be served was Mr. Harry Wofford. He can be contacted at the same address. The white woman who served as hostess was very congenial. She stated outright that the whole thing had been embarrassing to her all along and that she hoped that it could be straightened out. It might be possible to get her to voluntarily serve as a witness. Her name is Mrs. Hilma Medlin. She would be ideal. She also can be contacted by calling or writing the Dobbs House. I am sure that these persons can be subpoenaed if they refuse to volunteer. I know the manager should be subpoenaed.

I believe these are the basic facts in the situation. If there are other points that need to be clarified please feel free to call me collect. I hope this suit can be filed immediately. I think your suggestion of having the NAACP take the case is a very fine one. Please let me hear from you concerning this whole matter.

Sincerely yours,
M. L. King, Jr.,
President
MLK:mlb

TLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 64A.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

From Douglas E. Moore

3 October 1956
Durham, N.C.

An acquaintance from King's graduate school days at Boston University writes about his experiences as a proponent of Christian nonviolence and proposes "a regional group which utilizes the power of love and non-violence." On 7 December King's

Dear King;

This is Doug Moore, graduate of Boston University's School of Theology of 1953. In that you get a heavy volume of mail, I thought that I would use this type of introduction in order that you might know who it is that is writing.

I believe the last time I saw you we were talking together with Jean Martain and ironically enough, as I recall, the discussion centered around whether or not there were many Negro women that we knew who were pacifist.

First let me commend you for the tremendous job that you have done in Montgomery. I feel that what you have done is in keeping with radical Christianity but also in keeping with personalism at its profoundest depth.

I would have written earlier but felt that it would be better to write after the great surge of popular feeling settled down.

The thing that you have acted out in mass in Montgomery, I have been putting into practice here in North Carolina and Virginia. I have consistently refused to move to the back of buses because I was a Christian and I have never used law as a threat against drivers, but relied completely upon the force of love and Christian witness.

My first encounter of this nature took place in Newport News, Virginia. This was on a local bus. After telling the person that I would not move, the driver got off the bus and stayed for twenty minutes then he got back on and drove off.

Once when I was coming from Richmond Va. the driver asked me to move but I refused as a Christian. He said to me, “Well, I will not be responsible for what happens to you,” and to this I replied that I would die praying for him before I would move. Each time that he stopped he gave me a mean look but he only received a smile from me. We arrived in Greensboro with no difficulty. I would have died in that seat. Whenever a person threatens us with brutality and even death he is assuming that we value our lives more than eternal principles. I feel that my philosophical and theological belief in immortality comes to my aid in this situation as well as my Christian faith which does not conflict with the other two disciplines mentioned. When a man is afraid to die for what he believes to be true his concept of what is ultimately real is shallow.

I also reason from this point of view in that our government can call out young men to die for it; I feel that as a Christian ought to be willing to die for Jesus Christ and truth. This I have expounded very forcefully in speaking at Bennett College, Lovingstone College, and will present the same challenge to the students at Clafin University in Orangeburgh this winter. I am to speak at Morgon College this Sunday when I then too shall present the challenge.

It is a strange thing that we will ask a man to bail out at forty thousand feet to perfect a military weapon but think it is neurotic if he is willing to die for justice.

Here in Durham I was asked to move to the rear and I refused as a Christian and the driver asked me for my ticket. Then he said “You are not an interstate passenger, go on to the back and give these White people your seat.” I replied, “I know that I am not an interstate passenger; I am familiar with the Iren Morgan
Case of 1948 which said in essence that it was a burden on interstate commerce to segregate passengers; but as a Christian I refuse to move to the back. If I have to make a choice between Jesus or Caesar and Caesar in this instance being the state of North Carolina, then I will take Jesus.” So the driver got off the bus which was an express and stayed thirty minutes trying to figure out with the company what to do. However, after this passing of time, he returned to the bus and drove off.

But one of the most memorable experiences that I have ever had occurred in a little town in the center of North Carolina named Asheboro. This particular day I sat directly behind the driver and he of course asked me to move to the back. I again refused on the ground of being a Christian. Then he started to loud talk me, “I am not going to move this bus until you move.” I have often thought that if he had said that to me ten years ago before I got to know the way of love I would have replied to him “I got news for you” but I said, “I am sorry you feel that way but as a Christian I can not move.”

Then he went for the police and they came to see what was happening and I can recall the sherrif saying “Well, I am not going to arrest him.” The driver had no other course to follow than to drive the bus. As we went down the road I sang some of my favorite spirituals and hymns and then I asked him if he were angry with me and he replied, “Don’t say a word to me. You took advantage of me.” To this I replied, “No my action was not directed at you but to the state of North Carolina who is responsible for the immoral segregation laws being on the books.” As I got off the bus in Ramseur which is located in the country I told him that I loved him as a person.

When I arrived at where I was staying, I told my parishoners little grandson that I had sat on the front seat of the bus again but that was not enough, my job is not complete until I win the soul of the driver. At our regular morning worship we have a special prayer that this man might realize that my action was not directed at him but at the state of North Carolina.

About a month later I was on my way to Salisbury, N.C. and I had to make a bus change in Lexington, N.C. It had been raining all that week and was still raining that day. I saw a greyhound bus come into the yard and there was this driver. So I went out to wave at him. He stopped his bus and opened the door and said to me, “Preacher, which way are you going?” I told him which was in the opposite direction of the way he was going. Then he said this to me “Preacher, I have been having it pretty tough lately, will you pray for me? I told him I would at ten thirty that night when I remember others to our heavenly Father. He then replied, “Thanks very much preacher.”

This is perhaps the most meaningful experience that I have ever had in the winning of a person on the other side of the fence.

I have maintained for years that one-hundred well disciplined persons could break the backbone of segregated travel in North Carolina in less than a year. Again whenever I speak at colleges or at special meetings this is the content of my message for I feel that so much of what students hear does not challenge them. To explore such topics I usually use these subjects “Who’s in Your Gallery,” “Facing the Rising Sun,” or “Jesus or Caesar.”

My three years in North Carolina have been interesting. During that time I have picketed the New York Philhormonic orchestra because the Greensboro
3 Oct
1956
music company wanted to segregate me and I refused to go anywhere that I am
denied full rights. Whenever I have an opportunity to speak on radio or on televi-
sion I do the same thing that I do at the colleges. On one occasion they almost
cut me off but the manager told me that that would been the worse thing they
could have possibly done.

Well lets talk about something else and that is your coming to Durham October
15. You have a great opportunity to do us a great job. I have only been here since
last June 10, prior to that I was in Leasville, N.C., the Governors home town.
While I was there we organized an N.A.A.C.P. chapter; a voters league and I
helped the laundry workers organize and go out on strike. I was the most un-
popular Methodist preacher in town, that is the White people thought so.

The people of Durham have a great class problem and in addition to this they
are materialist. There is considerable exploitation of Negroes by Negroes. The
buses in this city have been desegregated as far as policy goes but the Negroes
still ride in the back from custom. Here the preachers could be of great help.

There are no Negro drivers and the line that the company makes its most
money is in the Negro section. I would think that something could be worked out
with the company. If you could give us the incentive we could create the right
psychological moment.

I don't know what you schedule will be when you are here but if you had the
time we might get together to discuss the possibility for a regional group which
utilizes the power of love and non-violence. I was supposed to have attended the
Atlanta meeting but at the time I was doing some teaching at Livingstone College,
where Geogre B. Thomas is teaching. In addition to this I was also pastoring.

I feel that there is need of such a group because it cast the problem and it
attacks in a new dimension. In talking with some of the top NAACP persons they
felt that other forces must be used in this struggle.

A group of this nature would solidify our efforts and give a coherent philoso-
phy behind what we are attempting to do. As you probably know there are not
many Negroes or Whites who have a firm spiritual or intellectual grasp upon this
whole idea of love and non-violence. This power has been in the Negro Church
for generations.

Such a group would help to give us direction on national movements. For ex-
ample it will help us to have a recognized spokesman rather than an opportunist
like Adam C. Powell trying to interfere on something that he has neither the
moral or intellectual power to do. Suggestion about days of prayers should have
come from you and not him.

With your influence I think that we could do the job very well. I am anxious to
hear how you feel about this for now is the time to make our move. Now I have
been a member of the FOR many years, almost ten, and know many of its top
men like John Swomley, A. J. Muste and Glen Smiley. Whether or not we would

2. John M. Swomley, Jr. (1915–), born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, received his B.A. (1936) from
Dickinson College, his M.A. (1939) and S.T.B. (1940) from Boston University, and his Ph.D. (1958)
from the University of Colorado. From 1944 to 1952 he led the National Council Against Conscription.
From 1953 to 1960 he served as national secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.
want to pattern a group along this line or be an affiliate of this group or establish
an indegious all together could be worked out.

I feel that we can not let this get cold on us for the work that you have done in
Montgomery is but the starting of a work that needs to be done throughout the
South. To do this job that needs to be done there must be direction that is system-
atic, consistent and above all coherent and Christ like.

In that I am a new comer, although I finished college here and have a small
mission church of 25 members, I doubt very seriously whether or not I will be able
to see you at anytime personally. For those who love to laud it over celebrities and
Durham most illustrative dignitaries will roll out the carpet for you, I have taken
the liberty to speak to you about some of the things that are on my heart through
the noisy keys of the typewriter.

Yours in Christ,
[signed]
Doug Moore

THLS. MLK-MBU: Box 62.

To Samuel S. Thomas

9 October 1956
[Montgomery, Ala.]

Mr. Samuel S. Thomas, 62172
Camp 602
Brunswick, N. C.

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Thanks for your very kind letter of September 25. I read your letter with a great
deal of interest and I am very happy to know that you have done a great deal of
serious thinking while you have been in the process of serving a prison term. I
was also happy to know of your interest in religion and your desire to become a
minister. I would say that if you are definitely serious about this matter and you
are willing to make the sacrifices necessary you have just as much right to enter
the ministry as anybody else. Your experience in prison and the conversion which
seems to have followed such an experience should give you a great deal of prac-
tical wisdom in guiding people who are grappling with the difficult decisions of
life. I don't think there is anything wrong with a person who is serving a term in
prison going into the ministry if that person is definitely reformed. You might be
just a person to demonstrate to hundreds of thousands who are going wrong in
our society the wisdom of going the right way. My only advice to you would be, be
sure that you are serious and willing to confront all of the sacrifices of the
ministry.

After checking through my books I find that I have loaned my copy of The