9. If you feel you cannot take it, walk for another week or two. We have confidence in our people. GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

THE MONTGOMERY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION
THE REV. M. L. KING, JR., PRESIDENT
THE REV. W. J. POWELL, SECRETARY

TD. MLKP-MBU: Box 2.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

To W. A. Gayle

19 December 1956
[Montgomery, Ala.]

In a letter also sent to the other two commissioners, Clyde Sellers and Frank Parks, and to Police Chief G. J. Ruppenthal, King requests additional police patrols along bus routes to "prevent possible violence." Two days earlier the city commissioners had indicated that, although they had "no alternative but to recognize" the Supreme Court decision, they promised, "through every legal means at our disposal, to see that the separation of the races is continued on the public transportation here in Montgomery." In a thinly veiled attack on King they added that "it is hoped that those recent comers to Montgomery, who claim to be the leaders of the boycott-crusaders here, and who have day in and day out, in nearly every state in the Union for over a year, denounced the white race, will cease their hypocritical and unjustifiable attacks upon the people of Montgomery and their Board of Commissioners and will counsel the members of their race not to act unwise." Ruppenthal rejected King's request for additional patrols, telling reporters that his department would provide "only regular protection."2

The Honorable Mayor W. A. Gayle
City Hall
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Mayor Gayle:

We greatly appreciate all efforts which you have previously made to maintain the peace and to keep violence at a minimum, through your public statements

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1. Al McConagha, "City Bows to Court Decision, Pledges Fight for Segregation," Montgomery Advertiser, 18 December 1956; and Statement by Board of Commissioners, City of Montgomery, 17 December 1956. A week earlier, in an interview with Southern Regional Council representatives, King indicated that "the power structure of Montgomery is concerned about this situation. They seem more alert than they have in the past. They told the Negro leaders, 'Don't worry about the White Citizen's Councils, or the City Commission.' . . . The Negro community is ready with a quiet approach—a nonviolent one, to resume riding buses. The Mayor had said quietly that he would not permit violence" (Emory Via and Fred Routh, Memorandum to SRC staff, 17 December 1956).

2. "'Regular Protection' Given 'Danger Zone,'" Montgomery Advertiser, 21 December 1956.
and otherwise. And we are hopefully looking forward to your continued efforts along these lines.

We understand that the Supreme Court’s mandate concerning bus segregation has been mailed to the Federal District Court. As soon as the District Court issues the formal decree, we shall be returning to the busses.

Although we are hopeful that no violent incidents will occur, we must recognize that possibility. There is that element of violent-minded people, of both races, of which we must be mindful.

Past experience reveals that the only places where violence has occurred in connection with the busses has been at the end of lines and on very dark streets. And the hours after dark are potentially more dangerous than the daytime.

We, therefore, request that you use every precaution to prevent possible violence, and that you will insure that the above-mentioned danger zones will be patrolled with extra caution.

We reaffirm our basic conviction that violence is both impractical and immoral. We have been training our people to remain non-violent in word and deed, and not to return hate for hate. We believe that violence in our city will lead to a long and desolate night of bitterness, which will bring shame to generations yet unborn.

Thanking you for your cooperation, we remain

Yours truly,
The Executive Board of
The Montgomery Improvement
Association, by
(Rev.) Martin L. King, Jr.

MLK:mlb

THLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 22.

From William Holmes Borders

19 December 1956

Pastor for two decades of Atlanta’s Wheat Street Baptist Church, Borders had known King since childhood. He spoke at the MIA’s Institute on Nonviolence and Social Change two weeks earlier.¹

¹. William Holmes Borders (1905–1993), born in Macon, Georgia, earned his B.A. (1929) from Morehouse College, his B.D. (1932) from Garrett Theological Seminary, and his M.A. (1936) from Northwestern University. The following year he became pastor of Atlanta’s Wheat Street Baptist Church, a few blocks from Ebenezer. Under his leadership, which lasted until his retirement in 1988, the church developed a complex of businesses, housing, and nonprofit organizations. Borders was a leader in many of Atlanta’s civil rights campaigns, including its bus desegregation protest in 1957.