assessment of urban centers as areas of concentration should be studied against rural centers to determine possibilities of setting up practical goals so that the whole movement can balance successes with setbacks.

G. The fight of the Negro for integration and equality is a vital component in the fight of the common man, Negro and white, to realize higher living standards, higher education, and culture, and a deeper commitment to moral and ethical principles. It is contributing to the movement of America to achieve a nation capable of utilizing its vastly impressive industrial might for the benefit of all.

TLc. BRP-DLC: Reel 3.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

“New Fields Await Negroes,
King Tells Mass Meeting”

24 December 1956
Montgomery, Ala.

At 1:30 A.M. on 23 December King and his family were awakened by a shotgun blast shattering their front door, a harbinger of the violence that would plague Montgomery the following month. At Dexter’s regular Sunday service that morning King “softly and without emotion” informed his congregation of the shooting, which injured no one and caused little damage. He told church members that he “would have liked to meet those who had done the shooting to tell them that surely they must know they could not solve problems that way. Without raising his voice, he added that even if he died his killers ‘would have 50,000 other Negroes here to get.’” He stated that “it may be that some of us have to die,” but the struggle will continue. An observer reported that “there was no stir in the congregation, no sign that anyone was surprised.” At the mass meeting that evening, attended by several hundred, King outlines future integration efforts being considered by the MIA.

The head of the boycott supporting Montgomery Improvement Assn., last night outlined other fields which he said his group “is turning its efforts toward now that the city buses are integrated.”

Speaking at a mass meeting of Negroes, Rev. M. L. King, Jr., said the areas were:

1. “Recreation: We have none, but we must work toward being able to use all facilities with the same determination we worked on with the buses. Separate but equal always winds up with it being separate but far from equal. Oak Park, for example, would certainly be all right for us.”

2. “Voting: The more Negroes we can get registered, the stronger we’ll be. If a

2. See similar recommendations in the report of the MIA Future Planning Committee, 14 March 1957, MLKP-MBU: Box 2.
city commissioner or official doesn’t please us, we can use our vote in a determin-
ing and decisive way.”

3. “Internal areas. We must work within our race to raise economic, health and inte-

tellectual standings.”

4. “Education. Here, we are going to lose many of our white friends that helped us dur-
ing the bus boycott. Even still we must have integrated schools as the Su-

preme Court in 1954 ruled we can. That is when our race will gain full equality. We

cannot rest in Montgomery until every public school is integrated.”

The Negro minister urged that all Negroes return to riding the buses. “We

must go back to the buses in big numbers. Then, perhaps, we might even be able
to do something about the fares.”

He said several people had complained because the fare was now 15 cents in-

stead of the 10 cents when the Negroes first began their boycott. “Let me say,

however, I would rather pay $2 to ride an integrated bus than pay one cent to

ride a segregated one.”

He cautioned bus riders to remain calm “in case there should be any violence.

Get the facts, watch for people who look as if they might start trouble. If there are cars following the bus suspiciously, by all means, get the tag numbers.

“Without all of this, you don’t have a case. Even if the police, perhaps, won’t
do anything there is always the FBI,” he said.

PD. Montgomery Advertiser, 24 December 1956.

To Fred L. Shuttlesworth

[26 December 1956]
[Montgomery, Ala.]

Following the court-ordered desegregation of Montgomery buses, activists in
Tallahassee, Birmingham, and other southern cities announced their intention to ride desegregated buses. On 26 December Tallahassee leader C. K. Steele, along with sixteen others, attempted to board city buses to test its segregation ordinance but called off the protest after confronting a shouting mob. The day after the Christmas night bombing of his parsonage, Fred Shuttlesworth and twenty-one others were arrested in Birmingham for violating that city’s bus segregation law.1 Following a two-hour mass meeting, Shuttlesworth decided to call off the protest, noting that “since the issue is properly one for the court we now believe that all purposes can be settled in the courts.”2 Later that

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1. Fred Lee Shuttlesworth (1922–), born in Montgomery, earned his B.A. (1951) from Selma University and his B.S. (1953) from Alabama State College. In 1956, while pastor of Birmingham’s Bethel Baptist Church, he founded and led the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), which after the banning of the NAACP in Alabama engaged in direct-action protest against segregation. In early 1957 Shuttlesworth helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), in which the ACMHR became an important affiliate.

2. “Negroes at Tallahassee, Birmingham Halt Plans for Mass Demonstrations,” Montgomery Adver-
tiser, 28 December 1956.