From Kwame Nkrumah

22 January 1957
Accra, Gold Coast

Prime Minister Nkrumah invites King to attend the independence celebrations marking the transition of the British colony the Gold Coast to the new African nation of Ghana.1

King accepted the invitation on 12 February, and traveled with Coretta King to the festivities in early March.

REV. MARTIN LUTTER KING
ROOM 825,
5 BEEKMAN STREET,
NEW YORK.2
Dear [Dr. King,]

I am enclosing, herewith, a formal invitation to the ceremonies which will be held in Accra between the 2nd and 10th March to mark the attainment of independence by the Gold Coast under the name of Ghana. It would give me great personal pleasure if you should be able to attend.

It is regretted that the limitations of the budget allowed for the celebrations will not permit the Government to bear the cost of your passage, but you would, of course, be a guest of the Government while you are in the country during and immediately before the period of the celebrations.

I attach a provisional outline programme and some notes on the country in particular relation to the celebrations.3 Apart from the central events covered by

1. Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972), born in Nkroful, Gold Coast, graduated from Achimota College in 1931. He later earned a B.A. (1939) and Th.B. (1942) from Lincoln University, and both an M.S. (1942) and M.A. (1943) from the University of Pennsylvania. While studying at the London School of Economics in 1945 and 1946, Nkrumah was active in several pan-African organizations. In 1947 he returned home to serve as general secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), which sought independence for the British colony. Dissatisfied with the slow progress of the UGCC, Nkrumah created the Convention People’s Party (CPP) in 1949 to pursue self-government through a campaign of nonviolence and non-cooperation. Imprisoned for sedition in 1950, Nkrumah was released in 1951 when British-sanctioned elections overwhelmingly placed him and the CPP in power. Under a British program known as “creative abdication,” Nkrumah became the first African-born prime minister in the history of the British Commonwealth. On 6 March 1957 the Gold Coast became the independent nation of Ghana, with Nkrumah as prime minister; in 1960 he became the republic’s first president, remaining in office until being overthrown in 1966.

2. This letter was initially sent to Bayard Rustin, who had arranged the invitation for King with the help of his friend Bill Sutherland, an African-American pacifist then working for Nkrumah’s finance minister, K. A. Gbedemah. In a 24 January letter to Rustin, Sutherland gave King advice on appropriate attire and other details about the trip (see Rustin to Sutherland, 8 February 1957; see also King’s belated thank-you letters to Nkrumah and Gbedemah, 17 April 1959 and 4 May 1959, respectively).

the programme, there will be a number of subsidiary functions which should be of interest.

Yours sincerely,

[signed] Kwame Nkrumah
PRIME MINISTER.

TALS. MLKP-MBU: Box 26A.

To Fannie E. Scott

28 January 1957
[Montgomery, Ala.]

Upon hearing reports that King "broke down after a prayer" during a 14 January MIA mass meeting, the widow of Coretta Scott King's grandfather sent King a handwritten note assuring him that the "darkest hour is just before the dawn." King tells Scott, whom he had never met, that reports of his breakdown were erroneous.

Mrs. Fannie E. Scott
304 W. 143rd Street
New York, New York

Dear Mrs. Scott:

Thanks for your very kind letter of recent date. I am very happy to know of your interest here in Montgomery. May I assure you that things are going very well with me and the family. Coretta and the baby are doing fine. We are determined as ever before to continue to struggle for freedom and justice here in Montgomery. The impression that the paper gave in the papers a few days ago was totally false. I neither collapsed nor broke down in tears. I am still as strong and healthy as ever before. Be sure to keep us in your prayers.

Sincerely yours,
M. L. King, Jr.,
Minister

MLK:mlb

TLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 65.

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1. Scott also asked a favor of King: "Before your sermon next sun—I want you to sing this song Precious Lord hold my hand & lead me on & I want you to preach about the children of Isreal, when they were held captive by Pharor" (Scott to King, 16 January 1957).