merely be running from the problem and not facing it courageously. This, I think, is the challenge before us, to stay here and work out the problem in a non-violent spirit. We have no more right to return to Africa than the hundreds of immigrants from other countries have to return to their countries. We are American citizens, and we deserve our rights here in this nation. I feel that God has marvelous plans for this world and this nation and we must have the faith to believe that one day these plans will materialize.

Very sincerely yours,
M. L. King, Jr.,
President

MLKmlb
(Dictated by Rev. King, but transcribed and signed in his absence.)

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

To Cynthia Bowles

12 June 1957
[Montgomery, Ala.]

Bowles, a student at Oberlin College and daughter of diplomat Chester Bowles, wrote King regarding his 7 February speech on that campus in which he called upon the president to travel to the South and make speeches on integration. Bowles expressed her desire to "exert pressure on the President to do this," but noted that King's opinion had "stirred up a bit of controversy" among other students. She requested "arguments and factual materials" to influence the opinions of those who disagreed with King. Bowles added that, "having lived in India I realize the immense strength of the kind of appeal you are making."

1. Bowles to King, 28 April 1957. King spoke at three events at Oberlin on 7 February. During a mid-day assembly he told "The Montgomery Story"; in the evening he participated in a panel discussion on "The New Negro in the New South" following his main address, "Justice Without Violence" (Beth Robinson, "King to Speak on Southern Racial Question," Oberlin Review, 5 February 1957; see also King, "The Montgomery Story," 7 February 1957). Cynthia Bowles Aguilar (1936–), born in New Haven, Connecticut, moved to India in 1951 when her father, Chester Bowles, was appointed U.S. ambassador. She attended Santiniketan University in West Bengal, India, and the University of Chicago before receiving a B.A. (1957) from Oberlin College. Bowles later earned a B.S. (1959) from Columbia University. Her 1956 book, At Home in India, details her experiences as an American student in India.
Miss Cynthia Bowles  
154 North Main Street  
Oberlin, Ohio  

Dear Miss Bowles:

Thanks for your letter of April 28. Absence from the city and the accumulation of a flood of mail have delayed my reply.

I am very happy to know of your interest in the question concerning the President coming South to make a major speech on the issue of Civil Rights. You state that some persons feel that if the President came South at this time to speak in this area it would only reinforce the strength of the anti-integration sentiment in the South. It seems to me that such a visit from the President would have the opposite effect. It would serve to reinforce and give backbone to the large group of white moderates in the South who are now afraid to speak out. It is my firm belief that there are more moderates in the white south than appears on the surface. These persons are silent today because of fear of social economic and political reprisals. But as soon as the Federal Government takes a positive stand, and especially the President, this would give these silent persons courage to take a stand. So long as the President refuses to render positive leadership in this area it will serve to push the moderates more and more in the background. As soon as he speaks out in this area I am convinced that it will bring the moderate whites more and more to the forefront. This, it seems to me, is one of the most vital things that we can expect from a visit by the President. The anti-integration forces are smaller than we think. They constitute a numerical minority. Since they can make more noise than others they often give the impression that they constitute a majority. But this isn't true. If the President comes South to make a major speech he will give the white southern liberal something to stand on even if it is nothing more than something to quote.

I am sure that this is not a detailed answer to the question but I hope these suggestions will be helpful.

Very sincerely yours,
M. L. King, Jr.,  
President

MLKmlb  
(Dictated by Rev. King, but transcribed and signed in his absence.)

TLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 15.