

To Billy Graham

31 August 1957
[Montgomery, Ala.]

King congratulates Graham on his successful New York crusade and urges him to extend his biracial revivals to "the hardcore states in the deep south." Graham had conducted interracial crusades since 1953, and during the New York crusade he recruited his first black associate, Cleveland pastor Howard Jones.

Dr. Billy Graham
The New Yorker Hotel
New York, New York

31 Aug
1957

Dear Dr. Graham:

For many weeks now I have intended writing you, but an extremely busy schedule has stood in my way. I want to express my deep appreciation to you and the members of your staff for your great hospitality on my visit with you in New York. I will long remember the fellowship we enjoyed together. The discussion period that we shared together will remain one of the high points of my life. It was also a great Christian experience to share the platform with you at Madison Square Garden and be a part of such a meaningful service of Christian worship.

I am very happy to know of the great success of the New York Crusade. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that this crusade has reached an all time high in the area of evangelism. History will have to record it as a literal tour de force in the area of evangelism. God has certainly done marvelous works through you in this great crusade.

I am deeply grateful to you for the stand which you have taken in the area of race relations. You have courageously brought the Christian gospel to bear on the question of race in all of its urgent dimensions. I am sure you will continue this emphasis in all of your preaching, for you, above any other preacher in America can open the eyes of many persons on this question. Your tremendous popularity, your extensive influence and your powerful message give you an opportunity in the area of human rights above almost any other person that we can point to. Your message in this area has additional weight because you are a native southerner. I am delighted to know that you will be conducting a crusade in Charlotte, North Carolina on a non-segregated basis. This is certainly a great step. I hope you will see your way clear to conduct an evangelistic crusade in one of the hardcore states in the deep south, even if it is not on as large a scale as most of your crusades.¹ The impact of such a crusade would be immeasurably great.

Although we have a long, long way to go in solving the internal problem of race facing our nation, I still have faith in the future. We are gradually emerging from the bleak and desolate midnight of injustice into the bright and glittering day-break of freedom and justice. This remains true because God is forever at work in his universe. I am convinced now more than ever before that God lives. They that stand against Him stand in a tragic and an already declared minority; they that stand with Him stand in the glow of the world's bright tomorrows.

1. Graham's Charlotte crusade in the fall of 1958 attracted more African Americans than any other since he began holding integrated revivals. A rally in Columbia, South Carolina, was scheduled to follow the one in Charlotte, but Governor George B. Timmerman denied Graham access to state property for the integrated gathering. The meeting was relocated to nearby Fort Jackson military base, and sixty thousand people attended the event. Nonetheless, Graham was criticized for not confronting Timmerman and for allowing former governor and segregationist James Byrnes to sit on the platform (John Pollock, *Billy Graham: The Authorized Biography* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966], p. 290).

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

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Again let me thank you for all that you did to make my visit with you such a joyous one. May God continue to bless you in the marvelous work that you are doing. You will have my continued prayers. Please extend my best regards to Mrs. [*Ruth McCue Bell*] Graham and all of the other fine persons that I met on your team.

With warm personal regards.

Sincerely yours,
Martin Luther King, Jr.,
Minister

MLK:mlb

TLc. DABCC.