As I said these are very minor points and they do not necessarily have to be changed. It is certainly true that a person as important as Nixon needs to be in the picture at some point, and maybe the situation you create is the best point to bring him in.

Again, I would like to say what a fine piece of work this is. You have done a marvelous job of grasping the underlying truth and philosophy of the movement. I am sure that this comic book will be welcomed by the American public. Please feel free to call on me at any time.

Very sincerely yours,

[signed] M. L. King, Jr./b
M. L. King, Jr.

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

THLSr. FORP-PSC-P.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

To Chester Bowles

28 October 1957
Montgomery, Ala.

In a 1 October letter Bowles, former U.S. ambassador to India, continued his efforts to persuade King to visit India: "A visit on your part . . . at this time to talk to Gandhian leaders about the potential power of non-violence in the situation which we face would have dramatic implications." Bowles believed such a conversation would provide King with "an ideal platform from which to launch a nation-wide or regional program that would adapt these same proven techniques to the explosive American challenge." He also mentioned that while serving as ambassador he had discussed with Gandhian leaders the applicability of nonviolent techniques to American racial problems.1


2. Additionally, Bowles reported that some Gandhians felt nonviolence "could solve any social-political problems, and even bring about the destruction of Communism within the Soviet Union itself." Other "more sober" observers believed that nonviolence succeeded in India "because the opponent . . . was a nation and a people with a conscience who preferred the good way to the bad way, and because the democratic atmosphere of Britain made it possible for the problems to be brought home to the people." Bowles reasoned that the victory in Montgomery indicated that the prospects for a Gandhian campaign "are even more favorable" in the United States because "here we are dealing with people, most of whom have a conscience."
Mr. Chester Bowles
Essex, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Bowles:

Thanks for your very inspiring letter of October 1. I have read every line of it with scrutinizing care. I would have answered before now, but absence from the city and the accumulation of a flood of mail stood in my way.

I am in total agreement with all that you said in the letter. I have been convinced for a long time that the Gandhian method of non-violence coupled with the Christian doctrine of love is the most powerful weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for human dignity. The American Negro has not even scratched the surface in utilizing this potent weapon. It is my hope that as the Negro plunges deeper into the quest for freedom and justice he will plunge even deeper into the philosophy of non-violence. The Negro all over the South must come to the point that he can say to his white brother: “We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we will not obey your evil laws. We will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer. So in winning the victory we will not only win freedom for ourselves, but we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that you will be changed also. The victory will be a double victory: We will defeat the evil system and win the hearts and souls of the perpetrator of the evil system.”3 It seems to me that this is the only way. I have said to audiences all over the country that if the Negro succumbs to the temptation of using violence in his struggle, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and their chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.

I am still planning to go to India. I agree with you in the feeling that I should go as soon as possible. At the present time I have made tentative plans to go about the middle of March. If this does not materialize, I will definitely go in the month of September 1958. I am deeply grateful to you for the great interest that you have taken in my humble efforts and the contacts you have already made for me in India. As soon as my plans for going to India are definite I will contact you in order to get the names of persons that I should see.

I notice in your letter that you will be in Washington on the 6th and 7th of November. Unfortunately, I will not get to Washington until the 9th of November. It seems, therefore, that I will not have an opportunity to see you on this trip. But I do hope it will be possible for us to get together for a long talk some time in the near future.

With warm personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

Martin Luther King, Jr.

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3. For further discussion of King’s use of this passage see note 20, King, “Some Things We Must Do,” 5 December 1957, p. 342 in this volume.
“Advice for Living”

November 1957
Chicago, Ill.

Question: My husband is one of the pillars of the church. He attends all services and contributes generously to all church activities. But when he comes home, he changes completely. He is a complete tyrant at home. He seems to hate me and the children, too. What can I do? He was once a good man.

Answer: I would suggest that you analyze the whole situation and see if there is anything within your personality that arouses this tyrannical response from your husband. Second, you should sit down and patiently talk over the whole matter with your husband, showing him the unhappiness and disharmony that he is bringing within the whole family. Third, since your husband is a devout churchman, you may consider counseling with your minister on this problem. He could probably say things to both of you that would restore the balance and stability of the home.

Question: Do you think God approves the death penalty for crimes like rape and murder?

Answer: I do not think God approves the death penalty for any crime—rape and murder included. God’s concern is to improve individuals and bring them to the point of conversion. Even criminology has repudiated the motive of punishment in favor of the reformation of the criminal. Shall a good God harbor resentment? Since the purpose of jailing a criminal is that of reformation rather than retribution—improving him rather than paying him back for some crime that he has done—it is highly inconsistent to take the life of a criminal. How can he improve if his life is taken? Capital punishment is against the best judgment of modern criminology and, above all, against the highest expression of love in the nature of God.

Question: Is love really the solution to the race problem? Are there not times when a man must stand up and fight fire with fire? I will grant that love, as Jesus lived it, is the ultimate ideal. But it seems to me preachers ought to be honest and tell folks if they live by the turn-the-other-cheek doctrine, the sharp boys out here in this cold world will strip them and boil them in oil. Why don’t you preachers admit that love, in the highest sense of the word, is impractical in the world of today?