On 30 January the SCLC executive committee gathered at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church to finalize plans for the Crusade for Citizenship, a campaign "to double the number of Negroes who vote in the South." At a press conference following the meeting, SCLC leaders announced that the Crusade would commence on 12 February with simultaneous mass rallies in twenty-one southern cities. In the following memorandum, King clarifies the objectives of the Crusade.

MEMORANDUM
FROM: M. L. King, Jr., President
TO: Speakers, Local Contacts, Participants in S.C.L.C.
RE: Crusade for Citizenship Mass Meeting, February 12, 1958

UNITY OF EMPHASIS

At our executive committee meeting on Thursday jan. 30, 1958, many expressed the hope that all persons would leave the Mass Meetings with a clear picture of the aims and purposes of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, with a firm determination to register and vote, and with a sense of being part of a southwide "crusade."

To help achieve this unity of aim and direction, we are urging you to make certain that the following points are clearly and simply made from the platform by some responsible person during the mass meeting:

1. The Crusade for Citizenship is a southwide movement. These meetings express this. The list should be read. It should be clear that this is the opening step in a long and hard, but necessary and glorious struggle.

1. SCLC also announced that King had invited the members of the Civil Rights Commission to attend the mass meetings to obtain "specific facts and pertinent information on present conditions and public climate regarding Negro voting in the South." King's 30 January invitation was declined by Civil Rights Commission chairman John A. Hannah, who confessed that the Commission's slow start was "due in no small part to a reticence" of the members "to proceed very vigorously until our nominations have been approved by the Senate" (SCLC, Press release, 30 January 1958; Hannah to King, 5 February 1958). Originally, SCLC had targeted 20 January as the kick-off date; on 19 December, the administrative committee revised the date to provide members more time to publicize the mass meetings (Cuthbert O. Simpkins, Minutes, SCLC administrative committee, 19 December 1957).

2. In an 8 February memorandum to SCLC representatives, King included drafts of resolutions to be adopted at the mass meetings. King also enclosed drafts of letters to be sent to congressional leaders and the attorney general urging the passage of stronger voting rights protections and stricter enforcement of existing laws.

3. With this memorandum King likely included a list of the scheduled mass meetings and their featured speakers (List of Crusade for Citizenship meetings, February 1958).
2. **The Crusade has two aims:**
   (a) to double the number of Negroes who vote in the South
   (b) and thus, to help liberate all Southerners, Negro and white, to extend
democracy in our great nation. When Negroes can vote, white people
will have greater economic and political freedom. The South can have
a real two party system—a necessity for real democracy.

3. **The Crusade will place emphasis on** preparing spiritually and tactically for
registration prior to the 1958 and 1960 elections.

4. **The Crusade is non-partisan.** Its major purpose is to get men and women to
realize that voting is a “moral” and “political” duty to God, to the nation, to
themselves, and to their children; then to help them learn how to register and
to want to vote. The Crusade will *not engage in partisan politics.* We urge
people to vote: we do not want to influence them to vote for any particular
party. We believe in the people. When they are aroused to vote, they will vote
intelligently. No one need tell them where their political interest lies. This is
morally the right approach.

5. **The right to vote is related to all other rights.** When Negroes have won and
fully exercise their right to vote many changes can then occur:
   (a) segregated buses will disappear
   (b) wages will be increased
   (c) police brutality will be a thing of the past
   (d) men who believe in justice will be sent to congress
   (e) “mob violence” will fade away
   (f) Justice will be established in the courts.

These things will come about because the majors, city councilmen, police
commissioners, the governors, congressmen and even the president will know that they
must do the right things or be turned out of office when the people go to the bal-
lot box.  

6. **The Crusade has two other main purposes:**
   (a) to urge Negroes to vote where they have the right to do so. This is im-
   portant since many fail to exercise the rights they possess.
   (b) to set up at the local level the type of action and organization that can
   struggle, come what may, to obtain the right to vote where it does not
   exist.

7. **The Crusade is not a talking campaign.** It is an action campaign. It aims to
include every man and woman of voting age—at the grass roots. We intend
to set up voting clinics and workshops in local communities. There is a con-
crete job for you to do—giving out leaflets, or going with a friend to regis-
ter, or visiting your neighbors, or helping people in your block learn how to
fill out registration forms, etc., etc., etc.

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4. A draft of this memorandum, likely prepared by Bayard Rustin, began this list with “mayors”
(King, Draft, To speakers, local contacts and members, 4 February 1958).

5. In a second 4 February memorandum to SCLC members, King reiterated the grassroots em-
phasis of the Crusade, asserting that the major objective is to “stimulate registration and voting at the
local level” and to find “in each community active volunteers to do an inspirational and tactical job.”

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8. The Crusade is not in conflict with the NAACP's wonderful work or that of any established local groups. Dr. King and Roy Wilkins see eye to eye on the need for various efforts. The crusade will prepare materials for local groups to use under their own name. The crusade will welcome suggestions and advice.

9. The Crusade will give meaning to the Civil Rights Bill. The Civil Rights Bill will help the crusade. However, no Legislation is any good unless, and until, people make use of it. If people exercise their rights under a law, even a weak law, they often achieve greater progress than was expected.

10. The Crusade must succeed for God has promised his children that the loving and the meek (the non-violent) shall inherit the earth.

Tlc. BRP-DLC.

To Thurgood Marshall

6 February 1958
Montgomery, Ala.

Just four weeks after purchasing NAACP lifetime memberships for himself and the MIA, King sends a $1,000 donation to the director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in “gratitude for the invaluable assistance that the staff . . . gave us in our struggle for bus integration.”

Thurgood Marshall, Esquire
107 West 43rd Street
New York 36, New York

Dear Thurgood:

I recommended to the Executive Board of the Montgomery Improvement Association a few weeks ago that we make a contribution to the Legal Defense and Educational Fund of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. This recommendation grew out of my deep sense of gratitude for the invaluable assistance that the staff of the Legal Defense Fund gave us in our struggle for bus integration and for the marvelous work it has done in the whole area of civil rights. This recommendation was unanimously accepted by the Executive Board and it was agreed that the Montgomery Improvement Association make a donation of one thousand dollars ($1,000.00) to the Legal Defense Fund. My only regret is that this gift can’t be larger.

We will remain eternally grateful to you and your staff for the great work you have done for not only the Negro in particular but American Democracy in general. No sane objective, intelligent individual can deprecate the work of the NAACP.

We hope this will in some little way aid you in the struggle ahead. As you well know the legal battle is not won yet and it will take plenty money to win it. You continue winning the legal victories for us and we will work passionately and unrelentingly to implement these victories on the local level through non-violent means. It seems to me that this dynamic legal approach supplemented by mass