Please make suggestions relative to anything which I might do preparatory to the meeting to be held next week.

Respectfully yours,

[signed]
John L. Tilley
Executive Director

JLT:ab
Enclosures 2

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 71.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

“Advice for Living”

July 1958
Chicago, Ill.

**Question:** My husband and I are whites. We recently moved to California where my husband teaches in a small community. He has a very emotional Negro boy in his class. Fortunately, he likes and respects my husband. Things go smoothly when the boy and my husband agree, but if he is corrected or disciplined, he reasons that my husband doesn’t like him because he is a Negro. How can we help him? He can’t go on hating and fighting and being insecure.

**Answer:** It is quite true that no one can go through life hating, fighting and being insecure. This type of response not only harms the object of hate, but it also does irreparable harm to the hater. It is both spiritually and psychologically damaging. It is important, however, to understand the causal basis for such personality responses. Few of us realize how far-reaching the impact of the tragedy of Little Rock has been upon not only the Negro schoolchildren, but upon white children also. The toll that injustice, segregation, discrimination and violence take on Negro schoolchildren’s emotions is tragic indeed. Consciously and unconsciously, all types of reactions are being manifested and it is people of goodwill, like you and your husband, who will have to carry the cross of patience, love and understanding. I would suggest that you get in touch with the boy’s parents, see his home environment, get the thinking of his parents. It may be that over-emphasis of the racial problem is being discussed in his presence and he may be trying to cover a feeling of guilt or shame for not measuring up to what your husband expects of him, or even what he expects of himself. I am sure that you and your husband can do a great deal to help this boy. We cannot afford to lose one youth in this struggle for full citizenship in which we find ourselves.

**Question:** I am 15 years old and I live in a small North Carolina city. When I finish high school should I stay here and be called names or go up North where I will have greater opportunities?
Answer: Going North will not guarantee that you will not be called names. Name calling is not peculiar to the South. Everywhere you go, you will find those who take keen delight in calling names. Some individuals must have the courage and moral strength to remain in their communities no matter how bad they are, and seek to lift them to new levels of creative living. I would suggest that you apply yourself diligently to your studies and think about what you would like to choose as your life's work. Look around your immediate community for the best school to prepare for this work. If there are no schools, consult your parents and school advisers about schools in other areas.

Question: My husband is an alcoholic. He recently started making physical attacks on me. I hate to break up our home, but I can't stand this brutality. Can I do anything to help him?

Answer: First, let me say that the person who becomes an alcoholic is victimized with a real sickness. The Yale studies on alcohol reveal that the alcoholic has a disease which is as serious as any other organic disease. Consequently, the alcoholic is in need of sympathy and understanding rather than scorn. Just as we would not scorn the person with tuberculosis, we should not scorn the alcoholic; rather we should seek to help him cure the disease. I would suggest that you have your husband talk with your clergyman and also contact Alcoholics Anonymous—a wonderful organization. In his sober moments, you may try to convince your husband of the injury that such a habit is bringing to his personality and to the whole family. Also seek to show him that he can never be helped unless he decides to help himself. I am sure that the brutality that you are suffering is quite miserable, but if you stay with the situation a little longer, you might contribute to your husband's rediscovery of himself.

Question: Ever since my marriage last June, I have had in-law troubles. At first, my husband's sister and her children were living with us. Now, his mother has moved in and she has taken over the house. She buys the groceries, opens the mail and pays all the bills (with his money). Whenever I complain, my husband blows up. What can I do? I feel like a child in my own home.

Answer: There is an expression that no home is big enough to have two women at its head. Certainly many homes have broken up over this very familiar problem. It is a very touchy problem, and it must be handled with the most judicious care. I would suggest that you have a frank talk with your husband and your mother-in-law simultaneously. Explain to them that you want to assume the full responsibility of a wife, and it will be wise, as well as good psychology, to ask your mother-in-law if she would be kind enough to teach you the things that she did for her son that made him the man that you loved and married. A new bride can always learn something, and it is a smart wife who will never place her husband in the position of having to choose between his wife and his mother.

Question: Is your church segregated? Do whites attend your service?

Answer: No. The Dexter Avenue Baptist Church is not a segregated church. It is open to men and women of all nations and races. Hardly a Sunday passes that
we do not have white visitors. Most of them come from other sections of the country, but occasionally we have white persons from the Montgomery community to worship with us.

**Question:** You give wonderful advice. I hope that you will help me. I worry all the time. I worry about little things and big things and sometimes when there is nothing to worry about at all I create something. How can I stop worrying so much?

**Answer:** Worry stems from several sources. Such things as a feeling of inadequacy, repressed emotions, illusions projected into reality and subconscious fears are all causal factors for continued worry. So your real problem is to discover the thing that is causing the worry. You probably cannot do this on your own. It will require the skilled and technical know-how of a person trained in this area. I would suggest that you talk with your physician and he can make definite recommendations. Another source to which you can turn is religion. One of the things that a positive and healthy religious faith gives an individual is a sense of inner equilibrium which removes all basic worries. Religion does not say an individual will never confront a problem, or that he will never worry about anything; it simply says that if the individual is sufficiently committed to the way of religion, he will have something within that will cause him to transcend every worry situation with power and faith. With this combination of medical advice and healthy religion, I am sure that you can solve your problem.

*PD. Ebony,* July 1958, p. 86.

**To Daisy Bates**

1 July 1958

[Montgomery, Ala.]

On 27 June King thanked Bates and her husband, Lucius, for their hospitality during his May visit to speak at the Arkansas AM&N College commencement in Pine Bluff, and praised her efforts to "make Christians, real Christians and Americans, real Americans."¹ In the following letter King invites Bates to serve as Dexter's

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¹ Following the commencement, King attended the graduation ceremony of Ernest Green, Little Rock Central High School's first black graduate. Daisy Lee Gatson Bates (1914–1999) was born in Huttig, Arkansas. She and her husband, Lucius Christopher (L. C.) Bates, founded the *Arkansas State Press* in Little Rock, an investigative newspaper that advocated better conditions for African Americans in the state. In 1952, after becoming president of the Arkansas State Conference of NAACP branches, Bates spearheaded the campaign to desegregate Little Rock schools and eventually coordinated the activities of the nine black students who integrated Central High School in September 1957. In 1958 Bates and the “Little Rock Nine” were presented with the NAACP's Spingarn award. At SCLC's October meeting that year in Norfolk, Virginia, Bates was elected to the organization's executive board. Bates later wrote of her experiences in the desegregation struggle (*The Long Shadow of Little Rock* [New York: David McKay Co., 1962]).