Statement Upon Return to Montgomery

[24 October 1958]
[Montgomery, Ala.]

Arriving home after his five-week convalescence in New York, King was cheered by a crowd of supporters and friends as he stepped from the airplane at Montgomery's Dennelly Field Airport. 1

Words are inadequate for me to express the joy that comes to my heart in having the privilege of seeing you, my abiding friends. I am deeply sorry that a deranged woman should have injured herself in seeking to injure me. I can say, in all sincerity, that I bear no bitterness toward her and I have felt no resentment from the sad moment that the experience occurred. I know that we want her to receive the necessary treatment so that she may become a constructive citizen in an integrated society where a disorganized personality need not become a menace to any man.

Every situation, no matter how trying, helps us to understand the truth that God has urged us to seek. There is truth to be learned from this unfortunate incident, and this truth is related to the experiences we have had in Montgomery. Together, we have tried to make nonviolence a way of life. It is imperative for ourselves, for Montgomery, for America and for the world that we succeed in this goal. The lack of restraint upon violence in our society along with the defiance of law by men in high places cannot but result in an atmosphere which engenders desperate deeds. The person whose mind is not stable is, in a sense, a reflection on the moral climate of our time. Deeds of awful consequences become possible because those who should love their brothers and cast aside shackles of hate do so little to live a Christian life.

I have come home. I have come back, not only because this is home, not only because my family is here, not only because you are my friends whom I love. I have come back to rejoin the ranks of you who are working ceaselessly for the realization of the ideal of Freedom and Justice for all men. I am back to continue my work which was temporarily interrupted. I shall have to keep my doctors happy and content by remaining, for a period, less active than before, but already I feel your strength in me.

There is one final thought I want to express. I know that I shall long remember, not the physical injury, or the pain I suffered, for we all suffer in life and suffering comes to an end more quickly than we know. What I shall remember,

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1. According to a reporter's account, the crowd's cheers muffled the "sobs of a few women who wept into handkerchiefs" ("King Returns To Montgomery," Alabama Tribune, 31 October 1958). Returning to the pulpit on 26 October, King reminded his congregation of the importance of faith: "In this great struggle for civil rights in America, one must have something to sustain him if he is to be successful ... he must always have the assurance of a cosmic companion who walks at his side." The following night the MIA honored King at a mass meeting at First Baptist Church ("Dexter Rejoices With Return Of Dr. King To Pulpit," Dexter Echo, 29 October 1958).
vividly, is the vast outpouring of sympathy and affection that came to me literally from everywhere—from Negro and white, from Catholic, Protestant and Jew, from the simple, the uneducated, the celebraties and the great. I know that this affection was not for me alone. Indeed it was far too much for any one man to deserve. It was really for you. It was an expression of the fact that the Montgomery Story had moved the hearts of men everywhere. Through me, the many thousands of people who wrote of their admiration, were really writing of their love for you. This is worth remembering. This is worth holding on to as we strive on for Freedom. And finally, as I indicated before, the experience I had in New York gave me time to think. I believe that I have sunk deeper the roots of my conviction that nonviolence [non-violent] resistance is the true path for overcoming injustice and for stamping out evil.

May God bless you.

TAD. MLKP-MBU: Box 93.

Address at Youth March for Integrated Schools in Washington, D.C., Delivered by Coretta Scott King

25 October 1958
New York, N.Y.

At the Lincoln Memorial Coretta Scott King delivered these remarks on behalf of her husband to ten thousand people who had marched down Constitution Avenue in support of school integration. During the march Harry Belafonte led a small integrated contingent of students to the White House to meet the president. They were met at the gate by a guard who informed them that neither the president nor any of his assistants would be available. After staging a half-hour picket, the students left a list of demands to be forwarded to the president. These remarks were contained in a press release issued from Youth March headquarters in New York City.

Walking for freedom has been an integral part of man’s struggle for freedom and dignity.

Gandhi of India began the great, non-violent deliverance of India by a massive people’s march to the sea. The people of China, defenseless against Japanese aggression, walked thousands of miles across their nation, and Japan never really

1. A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Martin Luther King, Jr. joined Ruth Bunche, Jackie Robinson, and Daisy Bates in co-chairing the Youth March.
2. Edward Peeks, “10,000 in Youth March say ‘integrate,’” Baltimore Afro-American, 1 November 1958. Preparations for the Youth March aggravated tensions among national civil rights leaders. In a 12 September letter to Randolph, Wilkins suggested that NAACP branches could not offer “active support to the project,” explaining that though he had agreed to be a sponsor of the march, the NAACP had been excluded from the event’s initial planning. He also expressed his group’s “sober reservations about the responsibilities involved in transporting a large number of children by bus to Washington.” In a 15 October letter to Wilkins, Randolph defended the inclusion of children in the protest.