26 Mar 1959

ing of the Atlanta Baptist Association. You know then that I cannot make the Mont-
gomery meeting, as much as I would like to.

My schedule follows:

Departing for Detroit—March 30th. . . . . . .
Will address the Baptist Ministers’ Conference in an appeal for
Returning to Atlanta—Wednesday, April 1
Atlanta Association board meeting—Thursday—April 2

You already know that you can count on me to assist in anyway that I can. Sorry
I cannot make the meeting.

[signed] Daddy
Sincerely,

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 29.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

From Ella J. Baker

26 March 1959
Atlanta, Ga.

SCLC’s associate director updates King on recent civil rights efforts. Baker had spent
the previous five weeks in Louisiana organizing a voter registration campaign and
collecting evidence of electoral discrimination to present to the U.S. Commission on
Civil Rights.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.
909 South Jackson Street
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Martin:

I returned to the Atlanta office, Tuesday, after a very meaningful stay in Shreve-
port. A detailed report will be sent the first of next week, but you will be inter-
ested to know that more than 65 voting complaints were sent to the Commission
on Civil Rights, and 200 persons presented themselves at Caddo Parish Courthouse
for registration last Thursday, March 19th.1

1. Baker later noted that only fifteen people were allowed to register that day (Baker, “Report of
the director to the executive board,” 15 May 1959). For more on Baker’s activities in Louisiana, see
Baker and R. C. Thomas to Registered voter, 14 March 1959, and Baker to R. C. Thomas, 21 March
1959.
Letters urging reports on books are now being sent out. However, we are without books to fill new orders, because the books from Houston have not been returned. We have written and called Rev. Hill several times, the last call was made in Shreveport, about a week ago. He again promised to ship the books at once. But to date, they have not arrived. You know, of course, that the book fund has been transferred to the general account, except for $36.94.

I stopped in Birmingham, Monday on my way from Shreveport to see what can be done there on a registration drive. Fred [Shuttlesworth] suggests that a letter from you to such key persons as Rev. Ware, Bishop Gibbs, and Attorney Billingsley, would be more productive than if he initiated it. They would be asked to contact other community representatives for a committee meeting to explore the possibilities of a coordinated, city-wide drive. I could go over for such a meeting and will send you a suggested letter on this tomorrow. It appears that S.C.L.C. will have to follow through on the program proposed at the January 24th meeting.

I don't think that the initial letters for the May meeting have been sent out, and Rev. Tilley will not be back until April 5th or 6th, he said. Hence, I'll send a draft Friday for your consideration, and you can call me or drop me a note by Monday or Tuesday.

Glad you had a nice trip—I found your card on my return to the office.

Best regards.

Sincerely yours,

[signed] Ella
Ella J. Baker
EJB/eb

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 20.

2. Baker refers to Stride Toward Freedom, which was often sold through churches and ministerial groups on consignment. Edward V. Hill was a Houston minister and SCLC member.

3. Baker refers to James Lowell Ware, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Birmingham; AME bishop Carey Abraham Gibbs; and Orzell Billingsley, Jr., who served on King's legal team during the Montgomery bus boycott.

4. Gathering in Montgomery on 24 January, SCLC representatives and Alabama black community leaders agreed to increase pressure on federal agencies to protect black voting rights and to organize voter registration drives (SCLC, Press release, 28 January 1959; see also King to Eisenhower, 25 January 1959, pp. 111--112 in this volume).

5. King to Friend of freedom, 13 April 1959. For more on the May meeting, see Statement Adopted at Spring Session of SCLC, 15 May 1959, pp. 205--208 in this volume.