

To William Stuart Nelson

7 April 1959
[Montgomery, Ala.]

King asks Howard University dean William Stuart Nelson for reading material on the caste system in India. Nelson, an advocate of Gandhian nonviolence who had been in India just prior to King's visit, sent the requested material on 10 April. He added that the civil rights movement in the United States "is proving a source of great encouragement to and re-awakening of people in India . . . thereby serving the cause of non-violence in the very country which has witnessed its most significant demonstration."¹

Dr. William S. Nelson
Howard University
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Nelson:

I trust that you are now settled down after your six month stay in India. We met many people in India who knew you and they never tired of mentioning your name in the most favorable manner.

In a real sense my visit to India was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. While I would not be so rash as to pretend to know India after such a brief visit, I do feel that I gained many meaningful insights that will deepen my understanding of nonviolence, and also my commitment to it. I hope that we will have an opportunity to sit down and talk about the trip in the not-too-distant-future.

I am writing you mainly to inquire whether you have any books or pamphlets on untouchability. If so, I would like to borrow them for about two weeks. I am in the process of making a study of untouchability, and unfortunately, I left India without securing any material on it.² If you have such material, and can find it possible to mail it to me, I would be more than happy to reimburse you for the costs involved. And you can expect me to return it within two weeks.

1. King had hoped that Nelson would serve as his guide in India, but Nelson left the country before King arrived. Nelson did consult on some of the arrangements for King's visit before returning to Howard University (Stewart Meacham to King, 12 December 1958, and Bristol to Johnson, 24 December 1958).

2. In his travel account published in *Ebony*, King compared the caste system in India with American segregation (see King, "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi," July 1959, pp. 235-236 in this volume).

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

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1959

There is another matter that I would like to explore with you which I will be writing you about in a few days.³

With best wishes, and warm personal regards, I am

Very sincerely yours,
Martin L. King, Jr.

MLK:mlb

TLC. MLKP-MBU: Box 32A.

3. In a 24 April letter, King invited Nelson to participate in a nonviolent institute being planned by SCLC for July 1959. Nelson agreed to do so in a 30 April reply. For more on the institute, see Resolutions, First Southwide Institute on Nonviolent Resistance to Segregation held on 22 July–24 July 1959, 11 August 1959, pp. 261–262 in this volume.