In the following press release, King explains that his decision to leave Montgomery was a response to pleas from his SCLC colleagues, and he links his move with the announcement that "a full scale assault will be made upon discrimination and segregation in all forms." The news of King’s relocation to Atlanta prompted Georgia governor Ernest Vandiver to vow that King would be kept under surveillance and prosecuted if he were "responsible for strife involving law violations."  

Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Inc.  
208 Auburn Avenue, N.E.  
Atlanta, Georgia  

For immediate release:  
Atlanta, Georgia—"The time has come for a broad, bold advance of the southern campaign for equality," declared Dr. Martin Luther King as he announced that he is shifting his base of operation from Montgomery, Alabama to Atlanta, Georgia.  

Dr. King is resigning as pastor of Montgomery’s historic Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and moving his family to Atlanta, where he will become co-pastor with his father in the 4,000 member Ebenezer Baptist Church. This new post will give the “American Gandhi” more time and a much better location to direct the south-wide campaign of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of which he is head.  

Dr. King will remain associated with the Montgomery Improvement Association, which launched and directed the world-famous bus boycott. He has assured its members that he will be in and out of Montgomery “almost as much as ever.”  

For the past year, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference has been pleading with Dr. King to give it the maximum of his invaluable leadership.  

Dr. King emphasized his change of residence was a painful decision, but came in response to the appeal of the SCLC that the time was right for expanded militant action across the South, and for which his presence closer to headquarters was im-

1. "Vandiver Says Rev. King Not 'Welcome' Here," Atlanta Daily World, 2 December 1959. King reflected on Vandiver’s statement in a letter to a supporter: "Why Governor Vandiver made such an extreme accusation I do not know, other than the fact that he probably felt the need to appeal to some of the reactionaries who vote to keep him in office" (King to Lee Peery, 23 December 1959).  
2. A late November SCLC document detailed the need for King’s "close presence virtually on a day to day basis" and called upon him "to take up the new and enlarged mission by a rearrangement of his schedules and if necessary by a change of his residence" (SCLC, “Suggested draft for amplifying press release,” 11 November–30 November 1959; see also Associated Negro Press, Press release, 18 November 1959).
dispensable. In responding to this urgent request, he said: "After prayerful con-
sideration, I am convinced that the psychological moment has come when a con-
centrated drive against injustice can bring great tangible gains. We must not let
the present strategic opportunity pass.

"Very soon our new program will be announced. Not only will it include a
stepped-up campaign of voter registration, but a full scale assault will be made
upon discrimination and segregation in all forms. We must train our youth and
adult leaders in the techniques of social change through non-violent resistance.
We must employ new methods of struggle, involving the masses of our people.
At the same time, we must realize that our crusade for citizenship is also for in-
tegrity. We cannot lay the whole blame for our short-comings upon those who
oppose us. We must purge ourselves of internal jealousies, defeatism and crim-
nal behaviour.

"Atlanta is perhaps the most strategic location for the headquarters of this ex-
pedition. We intend that it shall reach the far corners of every state of the South.
"I hate to leave Montgomery, but the people here realize that the call from the
whole South is one that cannot be denied."3

One of the oldest members of Dr. King’s church in Montgomery, speaking for
his fellow members stated that "Rev. King will not truly be leaving us because part
of him always will remain in Montgomery, and at the same time, part of us will go
with him. We’ll always be together, everywhere. The history books may write it Rev.
King was born in Atlanta, and then came to Montgomery, but we feel that he was
born in Montgomery in the struggle here, and now he is moving to Atlanta for
bigger responsibilities."

In emphasizing the importance of extending voter registration to all parts of
the South, Dr. King stated that in 1960 Negroes and their allies are planning a
huge and dramatic demonstration on a national scale. The foremost leaders, North
and South, will collaborate to insure the presidential candidates are committed
to a vigorous program to achieve concrete progress in every area of life.5 Further
details will be forthcoming after the first of the year from a national coordinating
committee.

TD. MLKP-MBU: Box 35.

3. In a subsequent interview King elaborated on his feelings about leaving: “I have a sort of nag-
ging conscience that someone will interpret my leaving Montgomery as a retreat from the civil rights
struggle. Actually, I will be involved in it on a larger scale. I can’t stop now. History has thrust some-
thing upon me from which I cannot turn away” ("Why Rev. M. L. King Is Leaving Montgomery: Leader

4. Richard Harris, an MIA activist, indicated to a reporter that he was proud of King’s move: “He’s
a big league ball player who has been batting .1000 in the minors. I’d rather see him in the majors,
even if he bats only .350. Montgomery can’t be selfish about Rev. King because we’ve never really
owned him. He belongs to the whole country” (“Why Rev. M. L. King Is Leaving Montgomery,”
jen, p. 17).

5. For more on the demonstrations at the Democratic and Republican national conventions, see
King and Randolph, Statement Announcing the March on the Conventions Movement for Freedom
Now, 9 June 1960, pp. 467-469 in this volume.