Co-Chairman, Mr. John Bates, Mrs. Carrie Buggs Mrs. Renetta Chapman, Mrs. Clara Mizzelle and Mrs. Vivian Thomas.

X. In order to increase the feeling of real fellowship in the Church and make visitors feel a hearty welcome, a Courtesy Committee shall be organized. It will be the purpose of this committee to make its way to the visitors on Sunday and give them a sense of real welcome. Also, this Committee shall sponsor Coffee Hours at least once monthly, immediately after Morning Service. At this time both visitors and members shall be invited to the Fellowship Hall (Basement) of the Church for a moment of fellowship and getting acquainted. This Committee shall consist of the following persons: Mrs. Coretta King, Chairman, Mrs. Earnestine Brooks, Vice Chairman, Mrs. Katie Taylor, Miss Lornell McCullough, Mrs. Hazel Taylor, Mrs. Mellie Thomas, Mrs. Ruth Davis, Mrs. Marjorie McCrary, Mrs. Eunice Simmons, Mrs. Mattie Hodges, and Mrs. Lucile Crosby.

XI. The Church Membership Roll shall be divided into an active and in-active list. Those members who fail to register for the year and who contribute nothing to the financial upkeep of the Church, shall be placed on the Roll as inactive members, unless some satisfactory explanation be given to the officers. An inactive member shall have no voting privileges in the Church.

XII. The Membership shall be divided into districts of (30) persons. Each district shall have a Captain and a Co-Captain. Each district shall be worked out on the basis of geographical proximity so that every person in a particular district will live in a small geographical radius. It will be the duty of the Co-Captains constantly to call and visit members in their district. Members that are slack in Church attendance and general Church responsibilities should be persuaded to improve. At the end of every (2) months, each Captain shall receive from the Office Secretary the names of members in his group who might be behind in their pledges. It shall be the duty of the Captain to persuade the member to bring up his or her pledge.

TD. EBCR.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

From Stanley D. Levison

[March 1960]

Levison reports on the progress of the Committee to Defend Martin Luther King and the Struggle for Freedom in the South, a legal defense group formed in response to King’s Alabama perjury indictment. He also describes the recent statement of Thurgood

1. A 3 March press release announced the formation of the committee and its plans to launch a “national fund-raising campaign” aimed at raising $200,000 to defend King and support SCLC’s voter registration drives in the South (Committee to Defend Martin Luther King and the Struggle for Freedom in the South, Press release, Committee to undertake fundraising campaign, 3 March 1960). In addition to Levison, the press release listed over forty other members including Bayard Rustin, A. Philip
Dear Martin,

Enclosed is a suggested draft for a fund appeal. It is somewhat long but I think the vital character of the moment will hold the attention of readers. Furthermore, it is important that the meaning of the events be clearly spelled out. I have not made separate drafts for the churches, directors and individuals because I think the one message is suitable for all. If you feel a specific point needs to be made for the different groups it can be added as a sentence which you or Ralph [Abernathy] would better be able to compose than I.

We are inundated with tasks. To organize a new committee is a complex job, but simultaneously we are thrown into a series of fund raising projects each of which is complicated. However, the response is heartwarming. Harry Belafonte has stirred the cultural forces as never before and they should become a new and increasing source of strength. For the first time we have gotten the official leadership of the N.Y. Central Labor Council to come into the work with more than mere token endorsements of paper resolutions. Last week they had delivered to their meeting a full report of our Defense Committee with its objective of defending you, backing the students, and the S.C.L.C. The entire delegated body endorsed the report voted to stage a huge demonstration on May 17th in the garment center, and to raise funds through the unions. They are setting up a committee of their own to carry through these purposes. We are particularly encouraged because they appear willing to back up the method of going to the shops for

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2. Levison likely enclosed an appeal for King’s legal defense that eventually appeared in the *New York Times*. The statement was endorsed by supporters of King, including SCLC ministers, black entertainers, and prominent liberals (see “Heed Their Rising Voices,” *New York Times*, 29 March 1960; see also Wofford to King, 1 April 1960, pp. 403–405 in this volume).

3. The committee was founded in late February in the New York apartment of Belafonte, who chaired the group’s cultural committee.

4. The Labor Council’s actions were reported in the 28 March minutes of the committee to defend Martin Luther King.

5. Among the speakers at the union-sponsored rally marking the sixth anniversary of the *Brown* decision were Morris Lusewitz, secretary of the New York Central Labor Council; Cleveland Robinson, secretary-treasurer of District 63 of the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU); and David Livingston, president of District 65 (“15,000 Attend Garment Center Civil Rights Rally,” *New York Times*, 18 May 1960). Following the rally the committee sponsored a benefit at New York City’s 369th Armory. Sidney Poitier and Dorothy Dandridge emceed the event, which included performances by Belafonte, folk singer Odetta, and jazz vocalist Sarah Vaughan (“New Negro Is Key in Struggle,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 21 May 1960). The committee later reported that the benefit netted over $10,000 (A. Philip Randolph and Gardner C. Taylor, Press release, and Committee to Defend Martin Luther King and the Struggle for Freedom in the South, “Statement of income and expenditure for period ending 7/31/1960,” both dated 7 October 1960).
Heed Their Rising Voices

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The whole world knows now, thousands of us. Southern Negro students are engaged in widespread non-violent demonstrations to protest un- just and repressive laws and practices. In that effort, the student movement is supported by the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. In its efforts to advance these questions, they are not being met with a non-violent wave of force by those who would deny and oust that document which the whole world looks upon as setting the pattern for modern freedom.

In Desegregate South Carolina, when 60 students peacefully sought to have doors opened and coffee at lunch counters in the business district, they were brutally arrested, tear-gassed, whipped, kicked, and thrown into an open, unheated, unventilated truck to stand for hours in the bitter cold.

In Montgomery, Alabama, other students sang "My Country, 'Tis Of Thee" as the State Capitol was locked; their leaders were expelled from school and thousands of police armed with whips and tear-gas swarmed the Alabama State College Campus. When the students returned, they were expelled and told to return to their homes. Their dining hall was padlocked to prevent their use of the recreation facilities.

In Tallahassee, Arizona, Nashville, Savannah, Columbus, Montgomery, Birmingham, Chariton, and a host of other cities in the South, young American teenagers, in the heat of their struggle, have been subjected to arbitrary and police power, have had their rights stepped on.

The promotion of democracy. Their courage and amazing resource have inspired millions and given a new dignity to the cause of freedom.

Small wonder that the Southern violations of the Constitution and the non-violent brand of right-fighting movement. Small wonder that they are determined to derive the same power, more than any other, as that which is the key to meaning this country. Their basic faith is that the Negro is the American, and that the Congress and the Constitution of this land, which is his birthright, is the key to the future of this land, which is his birthright.

And again and again the Southern violations have shown Dr. King's rightful place in the list of violations. They have hindered his home almost killing the wife and child. They have had their men- their home for years, for "speeding," "altering" and similar "offenses." And now they have charged him with "perjury" under which he could imprison him for ten years.

If America, if the nation, is to be a nation of the people by the people, and for the people, it cannot permit the students and millions of others—look for guidance and support, and thereby to intimidate all others who may rise in the South. Their courage is in the fullness of this affirmative movement, and with this to determine Negro Americans and weaken their will to struggle. The defense of Martin Luther King against the charges which government, clearly, there is no longer a part of the total struggle for freedom in the South.

Dissent-minded Americans cannot help but apply the reverse during the students and the quiet heroes of Dr. King. But this is one of those times where the leaders of the students and the leaders of the clergy have gathered in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the organization which is spearheading the surging right-moving movement. Under Dr. King's direction the Leadership Conference carries on. We believe it is the right of the people to think and believe as they wish.

We must heed their rising voices—yes—but we must use them.

We must extend ourselves above and beyond moral support and render the material help so urgently needed by those who are taking the risks, facing jail, and even death in a glorious reaffirmation of our Constitution and its Bill of Rights.

We urge you to join hands with our fellow Americans in the South by supporting, with your dollars, this Combined Appeal for all three needs—the defense of Martin Luther King—the support of the embattled students—and the struggle for the right-moving movement.

Your Help Is Urgently Needed ... NOW!!

We in the south who are struggling daily for dignity and freedom warmly endorse this appeal

The Struggle for Freedom in the South

312 West 12th Street, New York 27, N. Y.

Committee to Defend Martin Luther King and the Struggle for Freedom in the South

This advertisement, endorsed by supporters of King, including SCLC ministers, black entertainers, and prominent liberals, appeared in the New York Times on 29 March 1960. The ad states that the funds would be distributed three ways: King's defense for his Alabama perjury trial, support for student protesters, and the voting rights struggle.
individual collections. This means larger sums than we normally get from the union treasuries. I don’t think we will accomplish this easily but up to now we have never been able to get the officials to think this way. Too often they considered a fifty or one hundred dollar contribution as meeting the responsibility. With this new thinking we are starting down the right road.

All of this illustrates the point Bayard [Rustin] and I were attempting to make last week. This is a new stage in the struggle. It begins at the higher point where Montgomery left off. The students are taking on the strongest state power and demonstrating real will and determination. By their actions they are making the shadow boxing in Congress clear as a farce. They are by contrast exposing the lack of real fight that exists among allegedly friendly Congressmen and Presidential aspirants. And by example they are demonstrating the bankruptcy of the policy of relying upon the courts and legislation to achieve real results. The country is stirred by them and sickened by the feebleness of the foolishness in Congress. It is interesting and very significant that this weekend Thurgood Marshall has called a conference of lawyers in Washington and has been quoted as saying that the first stage of demonstrations should be ended and a new one in the courts now (is) to be developed. Characteristically, they want to give a tranquilizer or pacifier to the whole movement and send the people back to their ordinary preoccupations. More and more they are revealing themselves as gradualists in reality while they pretend to be uncompromising and firm. But they are not taking into account that people cannot and will not accept this policy. They are using up the good will past victories in the courts brought them, and increasingly criticism and cynicism about their motives is being expressed. It is not yet on a broad public scale because there is fear of appearance of disunity. But the clouds of distrust and opposition are gathering. Sooner or later their policy will have to change or their influence will sharply diminish and the true forces of struggle will move into effective leadership.

Please forgive this sloppy typing. I am doing this late at night at home and both the hour and my abilities are fighting me. Please be careful in copying my draft to see that it is checked for spelling. I learned how to write but neglected to learn how to spell. Love to Coretta and your family,

Fondly

[signed] Stanley

TALS. MLKP-MBU: Box 2.

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6. Levison refers to the filibuster of the 1960 civil rights legislation. For more on the filibuster, see Jacob K. Javits to King, 21 April 1960, pp. 439–440 in this volume.

7. The meeting was held 18–20 March at Howard University in order to discuss legal questions related to the arrests of student demonstrators. At the end of the three-day meeting, a news report quoted Marshall: “The right of protest is traditional, going back to dumping tea in Boston Harbor because we didn’t like certain things. These kids have a right to have their say. The right to carry a picket sign is the most precious right we have” (“NAACP Sits Down with the ‘Sit-Ins,’” New York Amsterdam News, 26 March 1960).