Again, let me say how deeply grateful I am to you for your concern and suggestions. Always feel free to write me about these matters. I cherish your advice. I hope things are going well with you. Do let me know when you plan to be in this section of the country again so that we will have an opportunity to have a long talk.

Give my best regards to all. We had the privilege of having Harold DeWolf in our home a few days ago. It was certainly wonderful to have him.

Very sincerely yours,
Martin L. King, Jr.

MLEmlb

TLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 22.

3. DeWolf, King’s graduate school advisor, visited Atlanta on 26 and 27 March 1960 (see King to DeWolf, 16 June 1960, pp. 472–474 in this volume).

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

To Harry S. Truman

19 April 1960
Atlanta, Ga.

At an 18 April news conference in Ithaca, New York, former president Truman declared that the southern lunch counter demonstrations were engineered by Communists. Truman later reportedly stated: “If anyone came into my store and tried to stop business I’d throw him out. The Negro should behave himself and show he’s a good citizen. Common sense and good will can solve this whole thing.” In the letter below a “baffled” King admonishes Truman: “Of course, we in the South constantly hear these McCarthy-like accusations and pay little attention to them; but when the accusations come from a man who was once chosen by the American people to serve as the chief custodian of the nation’s destiny then they rise to shocking and dangerous proportions.” No reply from Truman has been located.


3. Kennedy campaign aide Harris Wofford echoed King’s concerns in a 20 April 1960 letter to Truman. Wofford sent a copy of the letter to King, adding a handwritten suggestion that he invite Truman to discuss the matter, “one Baptist to another” (Wofford to King, 20 April 1960; see also “King Asks Truman to Apologize to Nation and Negro,” Birmingham World, 23 April 1960).
Dear Mr. Truman:

For many years I have admired you. Like many other Negroes I have deeply appreciated your civil rights record. But I must confess that some of your recent statements have completely baffled me, and served as an affront and disappointment to millions of Negroes of America. Your statement that appeared in the morning paper affirming that the "sit-ins" were Communist inspired is an unfortunate misrepresentation of facts. The more you talk about the sit-ins the more you reveal a limited grasp and an abysmal lack of understanding of what is taking place. It is a sad day for our country when men come to feel that oppressed people cannot desire freedom and human dignity unless they are motivated by Communism. Of course, we in the South constantly hear these McCarthy-like accusations and pay little attention to them; but when the accusations come from a man who was once chosen by the American people to serve as the chief custodian of the nation's destiny then they rise to shocking and dangerous proportions. We are sorry that you have not been able to project yourself in our place long enough to understand the inner longing for freedom and self respect that motivate our action. We also regret that you have not been able to see that the present movement on the part of the students is not for themselves alone, but a struggle that will help save the soul of America. As long as segregation exists, whether at lunch counters or in public schools, America is in danger of not only losing her prestige as a world leader, but also of losing her soul.

I have worked very closely with the students in this struggle and the one thing that I am convinced of is that no outside agency (Communist or otherwise) initiated this movement, and to my knowledge no Communist force has come in since it started, or will dominate it in the future. The fact that this is a spiritual movement rooted in the deepest tradition of nonviolence is enough to refute the argument that this movement was inspired by Communism which has a materialistic and anti-spiritualistic world view. No, the sit-ins were not inspired by Communism. They were inspired by the passionate yearning and the timeless longing for freedom and human dignity on the part of a people who have for years been trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. They grew out of the accumulated indignities of days gone by, and the boundless aspirations of generations yet unborn. We are very sorry that you have missed this point, and that you have been mislead either by your own analysis of the struggle or by misinformation that has come to you. If you feel that this movement is Communist inspired we feel that you should give the public some proof of such a strong indictment. If you cannot render such proof we feel that you owe the nation and the Negro people a public apology. Believing in your sense of goodwill and

4. In 1946 President Truman issued Executive Order 9808, which established the President's Committee on Civil Rights. Two years later, Truman issued Executive Order 9980, establishing a fair employment board to eliminate discriminatory hiring within the federal government concurrently with Executive Order 9981, which desegregated the United States armed forces.
humanitarian concern, we are confident that you would want to make such an apology. 

I would appreciate hearing from you on this matter if you find it possible.

Yours for the Cause of Freedom,
[signed] Martin L. King Jr.
Martin Luther King, Jr., President
The Southern Christian Leadership Conference
MLK:mlb

From Jacob K. Javits
21 April 1960

In the midst of a months-long filibuster over a bill that would eventually become the Civil Rights Act of 1960, SCLC urged passage of "a strong, clear-cut provision for federal referees or registrars" to protect voting rights in the South.\(^1\) In the telegram SCLC stated that "time has run out when watered-down or hamstrung proposals, claiming to remedy violations of Negro voting rights . . . can be considered progress."\(^2\)

Senator Javits (R-NY) replies below.

Rev. M. L. King, Jr., President
The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Inc.
208 Auburn Ave., N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Rev. King:

Thank you for your recent communication regarding Senate action on civil rights legislation. On April 8, 1960, after eight weeks of debate, the Senate passed H.R. 8601, the Civil Rights Act of 1960. This bill now goes back to the House of

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