The cause of justice and freedom has been betrayed by both political parties. We have looked patiently to Washington for our Constitutional rights, and then we have found a conspiracy of apathy and hypocrisy. Now we are tired. We are compelled to take the struggle into our own limited hands because for 100 years successive Republican and Democratic national administrations have failed to enforce our Constitutional liberties. We cannot in all good conscience wait any longer. In the spirit of the students, we continue our “sit-ins” against segregation until our national government begins it “stand ups” for justice.

TD. NAACP-DLC. Group III-A175.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

To Friend of Freedom

18 July 1960
Atlanta, Ga.

In the following form letter, King requests money to expand SCLC’s program and to cover legal fees for student protesters and the ministers who had been charged with libel by Alabama officials.1 King asks that potential donors “think of a few of our heroic board members such as Daisy Bates, Fred Shuttlesworth, C. K. Steele, Ralph D. Abernathy,” as well as the student activists: “If they can face jeering and hostile mobs and suffer brutal and nightmarish bombings to advance justice, how can you and I be less generous in our support?”

Dear Friend of Freedom:

This is a form letter. But, I want you to know that it is as personal and serious as anything I have ever written. It is an appeal for your support for the Southern freedom struggle.2 Therefore, I hope you will read every word of this letter with deep and sympathetic concern.3

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1. For more on the libel case, see John Malcolm Patterson to King, 9 May 1960, pp. 456–458 in this volume.
2. King’s handwritten draft of this letter included the following additional sentence: “It is an appeal for your backing in one of the most decisive moment in our quest for justice and human dignity” (King, Draft, Form letter to Friend of freedom, 18 July 1960).
3. In King’s draft, he ended this sentence with “reverent attention.” He continued: “The struggle for freedom in the south has entered upon a new stage, presenting us with unprecedented opportunities to advance. The student movement in movement are young students of the south, through sit-ins and other demonstrations, have demonstrated given to America a glowing example of disciplined, dignified non-violent action against the system of segregation. Indeed, they have courageously grappled with a new and creative method in the crisis in race relations. I know that you have followed these activities with a great sense of pride and appreciation. [1]You must know, however, that the people of the south have not engaged in this great movement without difficulties and trying moments. Scores of students have been arrested. In most instances they have been inflicted with heavy fines. At times they have faced jeering and hostile mobs, and police forces that sought to block their peaceful efforts with tear gas, night sticks, and fire hoses. [1]As the student movement gained
In recent months, several developments have combined to create a "civil rights crisis" of historic depth and magnitude:

First, southern Negro students launched a mass offensive that is cracking the walls of segregation. Their courageous and non-violent spirit has awed millions and given a new dignity to the cause of freedom. In retaliation, the southern racists have expelled them from schools, arrested and jailed them, denied them bail, and visited violence upon them.

Second, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference is spearheading a crusade to bring hundreds of thousands of new Negro votes into the 1960 election. The success of this campaign would, we are convinced, be one of the most important steps toward winning the Negro's equal rights in America.

Third, as the student sit-ins and voting crusade struggled on with grim determination, a vicious attack was directed against me by the State of Alabama. With calculation, the State indicted me on obviously false charges of perjury. When they moved to aid me, four of my close associates were also struck by the State. Having endorsed an advertisement in the New York Times appealing for funds on my behalf and the students, four SCLC board members, Reverends Ralph D. Abernathy, J. E. Lowery, Fred Shuttlesworth, and S. S. Seay, are being sued by the City Commissioners of Montgomery and the Governor of Alabama for two and one half million dollars for libel.

It is clear what the segregationists are attempting to do. Faced with the ending of their old order they would delay their demise by destroying the heroic mass student movement, by destroying uncompromising Negro leadership, and by demolishing our organizations of struggle and protest.

You can prevent this by giving your moral and financial support. Each of the aforementioned developments has given to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference new and heavy responsibilities. Funds are desperately needed NOW for legal defense; for the student movement which constantly calls on our organization for aid and guidance; for carrying our message of non-violence across the South thru institutes and workshops; and for continuing our voting crusade.

We need to expand our staff and to put experienced students and adults on the field to propagate an understanding of non-violent resistance. Please help us make the Southern Christian Leadership Conference strong for our battle.

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momentum, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr, spiritual leader and guide of the southern non-violent movement, was indicted by the State of Alabama on charges of perjury in connection with his state income tax return. Although he has been acquitted on one count of these false charges by an all white jury of Montgomery county, there is still need for financial aid to meet the legal expenses involved."


5. King's draft: "We are constantly called upon to assist the students in financing their heroic movement. In some instances we are called upon to assist students in paying fines, attorney fees, and scholarship aid. At the same time we hope during the summer to employ students in various communities throughout the south to keep burning the spirit of the sit-ins, so that the movement may press forward in September when [school?] resumes."
I appeal to you to help us make the most of the historic opportunities before us. PLEASE SEND WHATEVER CONTRIBUTION YOU CAN AFFORD TODAY. Speed your gift now in the enclosed envelope. NO POSTAGE IS NECESSARY. In addition to your immediate contribution, I would also like to urge you to make an annual pledge to our organization. Also, have your church, club, or other organization to do likewise. This will keep our work going on a substantial basis. The pledge card is enclosed—please return it today with your contribution. As you write your check think of a few of our heroic board members such as Daisy Bates, Fred Shuttlesworth, C. K. Steele, Ralph D. Abernathy, only to mention a few, and the heroic students of the South. If they can face jeering and hostile mobs and suffer brutal and nightmarish bombings to advance justice, how can you and I be less generous in our support?

Yours for the cause of freedom,
[signed] Martin Luther King Jr. Martin Luther King, Jr. President

Attest: Ralph D. Abernathy
Financial Secretary-Treasurer
MLK:Imh
Enclosures: 2

P.S. If you receive more than one of these letters, then please pass it on to a friend.

THLS. ERC-NHyF.

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From Ella J. Baker

20 July 1960

Shortly before resigning as executive director, Baker recommends that Bob Moses be sent to assist leaders of SCLC's Louisiana affiliate, the United Christian Movement. Moses, a high school math teacher, had come to know Baker while volunteering at

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1. Baker cited “the need for some extended rest” and upcoming cataract surgery as reasons for her 1 August resignation (Baker, Form letter to Friend, 31 July 1960). Robert Parris Moses (1935–), born in New York City, received a B.A. (1956) from Hamilton College and an M.A. (1957) from Harvard University. While teaching math at Horace Mann School in New York City from 1958 to 1961, Moses volunteered for SCLC and other civil rights organizations. He began working full-time for SNCC in 1961, moving to southwestern Mississippi to develop voter registration and education projects, and was named co-director of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) in 1962. Moses developed the idea that germinated into the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). Following the MFDP’s failure to unseat the state’s all-white delegates at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, Moses left Mississippi. In 1966, he went to Canada to avoid the draft, and two years later traveled to Tanzania to teach mathematics. He returned to the United States in 1976 and founded a math literacy program, the Algebra Project, with a five-year MacArthur fellowship he was awarded in 1982.