“Press Release from Dr. King
(Inside Fulton County Jail)”

21 October 1960
[Atlanta, Ga.]

Two days after his arrest, King comments on jailhouse conditions.

“Much to my chagrin, the jail is segregated, also. I suppose the thing that wears on me most is the dread monotony. Sixteen hours is a long time to spend within a few square feet with nothing creative to do.

“My personal staying power is buttressed by the courage and dedication of my fellow jail-mates and the concern that has been shown around the nation and the world for this moral stand we have taken.”

Upon being asked how long he would remain in jail, Dr. King replied “as long as is necessary.”

TD. SCLCR-GAMK Box 36.

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1. In a newspaper interview conducted the same day, King, who is described as “in shirtsleeves, tieless and unshaven,” characterized his jailers as “very courteous.” King reaffirmed his determination to refuse bail and explained that “when the students called me at the last minute to go with them, I felt I had a moral obligation to take part, since this was what I had been preaching” (Trezvant W. Anderson, “I Had to Practice What I Preached,” Pittsburgh Courier, 29 October 1960).

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

To Female Inmates

[19 October–23 October 1960]
[Atlanta, Ga.]

This handwritten letter, composed on lined paper from the same notebook in which King drafted his arraignment statement, may have been intended for the female protesters arrested during the Atlanta sit-ins.

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1. Jacqueline Kay Anderson, Blonddeen Arbert, Ann Ashmore, Diane Attaway, Charlotte Cherry, Mattie Cox, Gwendolyn Iles, Carolyn Long, Wylma Long, Johnnie Price, Marilyn Fryce, Minnie Riley, Patricia Simon, Patricia Ann Smith, Christine Sparks, Herschelle Sullivan, Lana Taylor, Yvonne Tucker, Laurine Weaver, and Bettye Williamson were reportedly arrested at Rich’s department store and bound over to criminal court on the first day of demonstrations (Bruce Galphin and Keeler McCartney, “King, 51 Others Arrested Here in New Sit-In Push: Further Protests Foreseen,” Atlanta Constitution, 20 October 1960). In a 22 October letter to the male prisoners, Carolyn Long wrote: “Tell M. L. that his dear cousins are fine.” She also reported that King, Sr. had visited her in jail and is “going to bring me some cigarettes” (see also Ashmore to All my friends in the pokey, 22 October 1960, and Cox et al. to Brothers, 23 October 1960). All the student protesters were released on or before 23 October.
Hello girls,

Words can never adequately express appreciation. Real appreciation must flow from the deep seas of the heart. But in my stumbling words I would like to thank you for your intrepid courage, your quiet dignity, and your undaunted faith in the power of non-violence. Never before have I been more proud to be a Negro. Never before have I had more faith in the future. It is inspiring enough to see the fellows willingly accepting jail rather than bail, but when young ladies are willing to accept this type of self suffering for the cause of freedom it is both majestic and sublime.

AL. CSKC: Mz.

2. King began this letter one page earlier in the notebook but stopped in the middle of the second sentence (King, Draft, To female inmates, 19 October–23 October 1960).

From Dexter Avenue Baptist Church

24 October 1960
Montgomery, Ala.

On 23 October, after black community leaders and white business owners agreed to a thirty-day halt to student-led demonstrations, charges stemming from the Atlanta sit-ins were dropped and all protesters except King were released from the Fulton County jail. King remained in custody awaiting a 25 October hearing to determine if his sit-in arrest violated the terms of a suspended sentence imposed on him in September when he was convicted of a minor traffic violation in DeKalb County. The Dexter congregation sends the following telegram of support to the King home.

DR AND MRS MARTIN LUTHER KING JR
363 JOHNSON AVE NORTHEAST ATLA

DEAR FRIENDS AS IN THE PAST WE WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP OF DEXTER AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH STILL FEELS STRONGLY ATTACHED TO YOU AND TO THE GREAT MINISTRY WHICH YOU ARE PERFORMING WE WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT OUR PRAYERS ARE WITH BOTH OF YOU DOING

1. While driving with white author Lillian Smith on 4 May, King was stopped by police and charged with having an improper driving license. Pleading guilty in Judge J. Oscar Mitchell’s court on 23 September, King was fined $25.00 and sentenced to a twelve-month probation. King later told reporters that he had not been informed about the suspended sentence (“Dr. King Is Accused under Old Charge,” New York Times, 25 October 1960; see also Frank Wells, “King Held on Old Count As Sit-Inners Leave Jail,” Atlanta Constitution, 24 October 1960).