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).

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

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 ATLANTA

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).
Nella girls,

Words can never adequately express appreciation. Real appreciation of trust
from the deep recess of the heart. But in my stumbling words
I would like to thank you for your unrepentant courage, your quiet dignity, and unquenchable spirit
in the power of non-violence. Never before have I been aware of the
beauty of a Negro. Never before have I
felt more faith in the future.
It is inspiring to see the fellows
standing in jail with the
same quiet, accepting faith with
their bail. Just as I used to think of
ladies as willing to accept the disgrace of self
suffering for the cause of freedom but
it is held majestic and sublime.
26 October 1960

From the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

26 October 1960
Atlanta, Ga.

At a packed public hearing on 25 October, DeKalb County judge J. Oscar Mitchell declared King’s involvement in the Rich’s sit-in a violation of his probation and sentenced him to four months hard labor at the Georgia State Prison in Reidsville. An SCLC press release issued the following day reported that Mitchell’s decision “struck the hundreds of King supporters like a bombshell. Mrs. King wept quietly, Dr. King, Sr. was visibly moved; many of the coeds of the Atlanta University system burst into tears. Faces that reflected shock and horror were innumerable.” Following sentencing, SNCC officers Marion Barry and Edward King sent this note of support. It is not likely that this wire, sent at 12:34 A.M. on the 26th, reached King before he was moved a few hours later from DeKalb County jail to the state prison; a handwritten note on the telegram reads “Not there.”

1. Roy Wilkins, also present in the courtroom, predicted that the verdict would “be felt all over the country as a persecution rather than a satisfaction of a violation of a traffic rule” (“King Given 4 Months Hard Labor,” Montgomery Advertiser, 26 October 1960).

2. Marion Shepilov Barry, Jr. (1936–), born in Itta Bena, Mississippi, received a B.A. (1958) from Le Moyne College and an M.S. (1960) from Fisk University. At Le Moyne Barry became active in the NAACP and at Fisk participated in the Nashville sit-ins. He was elected SNCC’s first chairman in April 1960 but resigned the following November to focus on academics. Barry left a doctoral program in 1964 to return to SNCC’s staff. Two years later he founded the Free D.C. Movement and organized a boycott of the city’s public transportation. In 1974, Barry was elected to D.C.’s first city council and served as mayor (1979–1991). After serving six months in prison on drug charges, he was reelected in 1994 and served as mayor until 1999. Edward Biking King, Jr. (1959–1982), born in Roanoke, Virginia, was a Kentucky State College student when he was elected SNCC historian at the group’s founding in April 1960; he later served as SNCC’s first administrative secretary. King was expelled from Kentucky State in the spring of 1960 for his protest activities. He resigned from SNCC in September 1961 to attend Wilberforce University, where he obtained a B.S. (1963) in education. He later became a business executive and served as associate director of the Association of American Publishers’ Office of Minority Manpower.