

From Nnamdi Azikiwe

26 October 1960
Lagos, Nigeria

Nnamdi Azikiwe, the newly appointed governor-general of Nigeria, writes in the hope that King will attend his inauguration.¹ King traveled to Lagos in November to

1. Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-1996), born in Zungeru, Nigeria, attended missionary schools in Lagos before receiving a B.A. (1930) and an M.A. (1932) from Lincoln University in Chester County, Pennsylvania. He also received an M.S. (1933) from the University of Pennsylvania. Azikiwe edited the Gold Coast's *Africa Morning Post* in the mid-1930s and was convicted of sedition by the colonial government for an article appearing therein; the conviction was later overturned on appeal. Returning to Nigeria in 1937, he founded the *West African Pilot* and four other periodicals, which he used to agitate for independence from Britain. In 1944 he helped found the National Council of Nigeria and

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attend the festivities, which included several luncheons and a dance performance in honor of the African independence leader and his wife.²

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
c/o Dr. Marguerite Cartwright,
57 Fifth Avenue,
New York 3, N.Y.

My dear Reverend King:

This is to inform you that I have included your name in the list of invitees to attend my inauguration on November 16, 1960, when I will be sworn in as Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Federation of Nigeria.

The occasion will be of historic interest because it will be the first time in our national history when a person of African descent will be assuming the high office of Head of State in Nigeria, as representative of Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth.

I hope that when the official invitation reaches you, you will be disposed to accept same.³ I am looking forward to an early reunion with you.

With kind wishes.

Sincerely yours,
[signed]
NNAMDI AZIKIWE

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 53A.

the Cameroons and in 1947 was elected to the Nigerian Legislative Council. Azikiwe was appointed to the honorary post of governor-general of Nigeria by Queen Elizabeth II in 1960. In 1963 Nigeria became a republic with Azikiwe as its first president; he served until deposed by a military coup in 1966.

2. Azikiwe, Invitation to the state luncheon, 18 November 1960; Azikiwe, Invitation to a display of national traditional dances, 18 November 1960; and K. O. Mbadiwe, Invitation to Martin Luther King, Jr., 19 November 1960.

3. A formal invitation to King was sent in care of *Pittsburgh Courier* columnist Marguerite Cartwright by the office of independent Nigeria's first prime minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Secretary to the Prime Minister of Nigeria to King, 23 October 1960). In her 23 October letter Cartwright forwarded the invitation and urged King to accept. In her 10 December 1960 article, Cartwright reported on the planning of the inauguration festivities: "Lucky candidates for the coveted invitations were personally selected by the then Governor General Designate. A number of the cables and invitations were directed to my home for forwarding" ("World Backdrop," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 December 1960).