

MIA Mass Meeting at Holt Street  
Baptist Church

5 Dec  
1955

[5 December 1955]  
Montgomery, Ala.

*The first mass meeting of the Montgomery Improvement Association attracted several thousand people to the spacious Holt Street Baptist Church, in a black working-class section of Montgomery. Both the sanctuary and the basement auditorium were filled well before the proceedings began, and an audience outside listened via loudspeakers. In addition to reporters, photographers, and two television crews, black leaders from other Alabama cities such as Birmingham, Mobile, and Tuscaloosa were among those in attendance. The meeting opened with two hymns, "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," a prayer by Rev. W. F. Alford, and a Scripture reading (Psalm 34) by Rev. U. J. Fields.*

*King then delivered an address that he had quickly composed before the meeting. He later recalled the questions in his mind as he considered what to say: "How could I make a speech that would be militant enough to keep my people aroused to positive action and yet moderate enough to keep this fervor within controllable and Christian bounds? I knew that many of the Negro people were victims of bitterness that could easily rise to flood proportions. What could I say to keep them courageous and prepared for positive action and yet devoid of hate and resentment? Could the militant and the moderate be combined in a single speech?"<sup>1</sup>*

*In his speech, King described the mistreatment of black bus passengers and the civil disobedience of Rosa Parks, and then justified the nonviolent protest by appealing to African-American Christian faith in love and justice and the American democratic tradition of legal protest.*

*A quiet pause followed King's address, then great applause. Rev. Edgar N. French of the Hilliard Chapel AME Zion Church introduced Rosa Parks and Fred Daniel, a student at Alabama State College who had been arrested that morning on a disorderly conduct charge (later dismissed) for allegedly preventing a woman from getting on a bus. Rev. Abernathy read the resolutions that he, King, and others on the resolution committee had drafted. The assembly voted overwhelmingly in favor, resolving "to refrain from riding buses . . . until some arrangement has been worked out" with the bus company. King appealed for funds, then left to speak at a YMCA fathers and sons banquet.*

[King:] My friends, we are certainly very happy to see each of you out this evening. We are here this evening for serious business. [Audience:] (Yes) We are here in a general sense because first and foremost we are American citizens (*That's right*) and we are determined to apply our citizenship to the fullness of its meaning. (*Yeah, That's right*) We are here also because of our love for democracy (*Yes*), because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action (*Yes*) is the greatest form of government on earth. (*That's right*)

But we are here in a specific sense, because of the bus situation in Montgomery. (*Yes*) We are here because we are determined to get the situation corrected. This situation is not at all new. The problem has existed over endless years. (*That's right*) For many years now Negroes in Montgomery and so many other areas have

---

1. King, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 59–60. King's quotations from the speech in *Stride* (pp. 61–63) differ somewhat from his actual remarks.

5 Dec  
1955

been inflicted with the paralysis of crippling fears (*Yes*) on buses in our community. (*That's right*) On so many occasions, Negroes have been intimidated and humiliated and impressed—oppressed—because of the sheer fact that they were Negroes. (*That's right*) I don't have time this evening to go into the history of these numerous cases. Many of them now are lost in the thick fog of oblivion (*Yes*), but at least one stands before us now with glaring dimensions. (*Yes*)

Just the other day, just last Thursday to be exact, one of the finest citizens in Montgomery (*Amen*)—not one of the finest Negro citizens (*That's right*), but one of the finest citizens in Montgomery—was taken from a bus (*Yes*) and carried to jail and arrested (*Yes*) because she refused to get up to give her seat to a white person. (*Yes, That's right*) Now the press would have us believe that she refused to leave a reserved section for Negroes (*Yes*), but I want you to know this evening that there is no reserved section. (*All right*) The law has never been clarified at that point. (*Hell no*) Now I think I speak with, with legal authority—not that I have any legal authority, but I think I speak with legal authority behind me (*All right*)—that the law, the ordinance, the city ordinance has never been totally clarified.<sup>2</sup> (*That's right*)

Mrs. Rosa Parks is a fine person. (*Well, well said*) And, since it had to happen, I'm happy that it happened to a person like Mrs. Parks, for nobody can doubt the boundless outreach of her integrity. (*Sure enough*) Nobody can doubt the height of her character (*Yes*), nobody can doubt the depth of her Christian commitment and devotion to the teachings of Jesus. (*All right*) And I'm happy since it had to happen, it happened to a person that nobody can call a disturbing factor in the community. (*All right*) Mrs. Parks is a fine Christian person, unassuming, and yet there is integrity and character there. And just because she refused to get up, she was arrested.

And you know, my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. [*thundering applause*] There comes a time, my friends, when people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. (*Keep talking*) There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing amid the piercing chill of an alpine November. (*That's right*) [*applause*] There comes a time. (*Yes sir, Teach*) [*applause continues*]

We are here, we are here this evening because we're tired now. (*Yes*) [*applause*] And I want to say that we are not here advocating violence. (*No*) We have never done that. (*Repeat that, Repeat that*) [*applause*] I want it to be known throughout Montgomery and throughout this nation (*Well*) that we are Christian people. (*Yes*) [*applause*] We believe in the Christian religion. We believe in the teachings of Jesus. (*Well*) The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. (*Yes*) [*applause*] That's all.

And certainly, certainly, this is the glory of America, with all of its faults. (*Yeah*) This is the glory of our democracy. If we were incarcerated behind the iron cur-

---

2. By custom bus drivers could request that black passengers move to the rear, one row at a time, when the forward white section was filled and additional white passengers had to be accommodated. See discussion of segregation ordinance in "Statement of Negro Citizens on Bus Situation," 10 December 1955, pp. 81–83 in this volume.

5 Dec  
1955

tains of a Communistic nation we couldn't do this. If we were dropped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime we couldn't do this. (*All right*) But the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right. (*That's right*) [*applause*] My friends, don't let anybody make us feel that we are to be compared in our actions with the Ku Klux Klan or with the White Citizens Council. [*applause*] There will be no crosses burned at any bus stops in Montgomery. (*Well, That's right*) There will be no white persons pulled out of their homes and taken out on some distant road and lynched for not cooperating. [*applause*] There will be nobody amid, among us who will stand up and defy the Constitution of this nation. [*applause*] We only assemble here because of our desire to see right exist. [*applause*] My friends, I want it to be known that we're going to work with grim and bold determination to gain justice on the buses in this city. [*applause*]

And we are not wrong, we are not wrong in what we are doing. (*Well*) If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. (*Yes sir*) [*applause*] If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. (*Yes*) [*applause*] If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. (*That's right*) [*applause*] If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer that never came down to earth. (*Yes*) [*applause*] If we are wrong, justice is a lie (*Yes*). Love has no meaning. [*applause*] And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water (*Yes*) [*applause*], and righteousness like a mighty stream.<sup>3</sup> (*Keep talking*) [*applause*]

I want to say that in all of our actions we must stick together. (*That's right*) [*applause*] Unity is the great need of the hour (*Well, That's right*), and if we are united we can get many of the things that we not only desire but which we justly deserve. (*Yeah*) And don't let anybody frighten you. (*Yeah*) We are not afraid of what we are doing (*Oh no*), because we are doing it within the law. (*All right*) There is never a time in our American democracy that we must ever think we're wrong when we protest. (*Yes sir*) We reserve that right. When labor all over this nation came to see that it would be trampled over by capitalistic power, it was nothing wrong with labor getting together and organizing and protesting for its rights. (*That's right*)

We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long, are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And now we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality. [*applause*] May I say to you my friends, as I come to a close, and just giving some idea of why we are assembled here, that we must keep—and I want to stress this, in all of our doings, in all of our deliberations here this evening and all of the week and while—whatever we do, we must keep God in the forefront. (*Yeah*) Let us be Christian in all of our actions. (*That's right*) But I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough for us to talk about love, love is one of the pivotal points of the Christian face, faith. There is another side called justice. And justice is really love in calculation. (*All right*) Justice is love correcting that which revolts against love. (*Well*)

The Almighty God himself is not the only, not the, not the God just standing out saying through Hosea, "I love you, Israel." He's also the God that stands up before the nations and said: "Be still and know that I'm God (*Yeah*), that if you

---

3. Amos 5:24.

5 Dec don't obey me I will break the backbone of your power (*Yeah*) and slap you out of  
1955 the orbits of your international and national relationships.”<sup>4</sup> (*That's right*) Stand-  
ing beside love is always justice, and we are only using the tools of justice. Not  
only are we using the tools of persuasion, but we've come to see that we've got to  
use the tools of coercion. Not only is this thing a process of education, but it is  
also a process of legislation. [*applause*]

As we stand and sit here this evening and as we prepare ourselves for what lies  
ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we are going to stick  
together. [*applause*] We are going to work together. [*applause*] Right here in  
Montgomery, when the history books are written in the future (*Yes*), somebody  
will have to say, “There lived a race of people (*Well*), a *black* people (*Yes sir*),  
'fleecy locks and black complexion' (*Yes*), a people who had the moral courage  
to stand up for their rights.<sup>5</sup> [*applause*] And thereby they injected a new meaning  
into the veins of history and of civilization.” And we're gonna do that. God grant  
that we will do it before it is too late. (*Oh yeah*) As we proceed with our program  
let us think of these things. (*Yes*) [*applause*]

[*recording interrupted*] . . . Mrs. Parks and Mr. Fred Daniel. He will tell you why  
they're being, you know why Mrs. Parks is being presented, and also Mr. Fred  
Daniel will be presented. Reverend French will make the presentation.

[*French:*] Fellow American citizens. I say “American citizens” because I believe  
tonight more than any other time in my whole life that we have arrived at the  
point in life where we can see for ourselves a new destiny. (*Yes*) Our horizons are  
broader. I think the record of our racial group speaks with various languages  
attesting to the fact that we have been, since the lifting of the bonds of slavery,  
law-abiding, honest, tax-paying citizens of America. (*Yeah*) [*applause*] And we be-  
lieve that our record warrants for us (*All right*) the recognition of citizens of  
America. (*Yes*) We don't mean Negro citizens. We don't mean second-rate citi-  
zens. We simply mean citizens of America. (*That's right*) [*applause*] I have a re-  
sponsibility to and for a group of students. Like possibly many of you out there  
before me, I have the responsibility of teaching them democracy. I don't have to  
remind you that when occurrences like these take place and many of the other  
things that have happened occur, and when they begin firing questions away at  
you, you feel just a little unequal to the task of formulating them into real citizens  
of America. (*Yes*) But that's our solemn responsibility. And each of us, I'm sure,  
has accepted that responsibility, and we are going to do our best with molding  
these [*recording interrupted*] . . . active in civic and social affairs in the community.  
[*applause*] An upstanding, law-abiding citizen, one who would deprive no one of  
rights that belong to them. (*All right*) [*applause*] It has already been pointed out  
to you time and again that she was ordered from her seat on the bus, a public  
conveyance for which she had paid the legal fare. (*Well*) [*applause*] What dif-

4. King refers to Hosea 11:1 (“When Israel was a child, I loved him”). He may also refer to Psalm 46:10 (“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”).

5. The phrase “fleecy locks and black complexion” is from a poem, “The Negro's Complaint” (1788), by British poet William Cowper. In later speeches King included longer quotations from this poem (see note 5, “The ‘New Negro’ of the South: Behind the Montgomery Story,” June 1956, p. 283 in this volume).

5 Dec  
1955

ference does it make even if the president of the United States—and [*he's?*] the greatest individual in these United States of America that I know about [*applause*]—if he had gotten on the bus? Mrs. Parks was a lady, and any gentleman would allow a lady to have a seat. (*Speak up*) [*applause*] But because other passengers came after she was seated, she was ordered to leave her seat, and because she refused, she was put in jail. I have the responsibility, and it's not an easy task, to present to you the victim of this gross injustice, almost inhumanity, and absolute undemocratic principle: Mrs. Rosa Parks.<sup>6</sup> [*applause*] [*recording interrupted*]

You know, during my life I've heard tell of a number of false alarms, but I have a responsibility of presenting another victim. President, late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said some years ago, in one of his fireside chats to the people of this nation, that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. (*All right*) [*applause*] When we become victims of fear, it is hard indeed to explain our actions. (*All right*) Thank God I feel that I can say this evening that we are moving sanely and soberly. We are not allowing our emotions to control us. We are guiding and channeling our emotions to the extent that we feel that God shall give us the victory. [*applause*]

The press would have us believe that someone has organized some goon squads, whatever that is [*laughter*], whose purpose it was to molest and intimidate those who attempted to board the city buses this morning. But if that kind of thing happened, thank God I don't know anything about it. (*That's right*) But somebody became a victim of that kind of fear and notion. And you know, the psychologists have a way of saying that if you begin thinking of things strong enough, you can become such a victim of that kind of thing until it becomes a reality to you. [*applause*] Somebody saw a young man, a citizen of America, attending the courtesies that any young man would attend a lady walking down the street. And he was so engrossed with the idea of intimidation and violence that even the light, gentle touch of the hand appeared to be an act of molesting to this individual. (*That's right, Speak up*)

Now the press again would have you believe that here was a young man who latched on to a lady who was attempting to board the bus and wrestled her away from the door, saying, "You can't ride this bus. I won't allow you to do it." (*Yes*) [*applause*] But I have the responsibility of presenting to you the gentleman that is so erroneously accused. Again we present a young man, an American citizen, one who is preparing himself for greater service to this country, a student at Alabama State College [*applause*], a member of the First Baptist Church of the city of Montgomery [*applause*], a young man who is so industrious and zealous about his undertaking and his studies, until he gets up early hours in the morning and carries a paper route before he goes to school and makes good grades in the classroom. I have the responsibility of presenting Mr. Fred Daniel. (*Yes*) [*applause*] [*recording interrupted*]

They have the moral courage to stand. But these alone cannot win this victory

---

6. Two months later Parks commented, "I wasn't then and [have] not since then been asked to speak at any of the meetings. I appreciate the fact of not having to make speeches[,] for other people have suffered indignities, and it is really our fight rather than mine" (Parks, interview by Willie Mae Lee, 5 February 1956). (The complete citation, including archival location, for all documents referenced in the notes may be found in the Calendar of Documents.)

5 Dec that inevitably must be ours. (*All right*) [*applause*] Each of us here, and those who  
 1955 are not here tonight, have a responsibility in this great task. (*Yes*) And I'm plead-  
 ing to you, this evening, to let every one of us, under God, join our hands and  
 hearts together in this great concerted effort. And let each of us go out from here  
 resolved as never before in our lives, to never give back one inch until we shall  
 be accorded the full respect and rights. [*applause*] [*recording interrupted*]

[*King:*] I think we are moving on with a great deal of enthusiasm this evening,  
 the type of thing that we need in our efforts. And we are certainly very happy to  
 see that, indeed. We at least see that you are with this cause and you are with our  
 struggle. It is a struggle for all of us, not just one, but all (*Yeah*), and we're gonna  
 stick with it. I'd like to say just before we move to the next point that I'm very  
 happy to see all over this audience some of the outstanding figures from over  
 the state. (*Right*) Montgomery is not only here but I see folk here from Mobile  
 and Birmingham and Tuscaloosa and some of our other points in Alabama. [*ap-  
 plause*] I see Reverend Ware here from Birmingham, one of the outstanding min-  
 isters of our state and a great champion of civil rights; and then that stalwart,  
 militant Christian gentleman, Emory Jackson of the *Birmingham World*, we're cer-  
 tainly happy to see him here, one of the greats in our struggle for democracy and  
 first-class citizenship; and many others that I will not take our time to mention.<sup>7</sup>  
 I'm very happy to see them here.

Now at this point, Reverend Abernathy, pastor of the First Baptist Church of  
 Montgomery, will come to us and read the resolutions and recommendations. I  
 want you to listen to this, and be very careful in listening to it. Listen with a great  
 deal of interest so that you will know everything he said, because we want you to  
 vote on it after it's over. Reverend Abernathy of the First Baptist Church.

[*Abernathy:*] Thank you, Dr. King. All of you who know me, know very well that  
 I would love to make a speech now. [*laughter, applause*] I, whenever you start talk-  
 ing about freedom and start talking about justice, you know I have something to  
 say about it. (*Well*) And you further know, those of you who heard me on this past  
 Sunday morning by radio, beyond a shadow of doubt I stand for integration in  
 this American society. (*Amen*) [*applause*] But I have been asked to read these  
 resolutions and I want to read them carefully to you in order that you might  
 understand them. I've only received them a few moments ago, and it may be that  
 I'll read slow. I'm sorry that some members of the press have dismissed them-  
 selves, because there are some things in here I'd really want them to have. [*ap-  
 plause*] I certainly hope, I certainly hope that the television man will come back.  
 (*Well*) [*applause*] You know, it isn't fair to get part of it. I want you to get all of it.  
 [*applause*] I guess I better read. (*Read*) [*laughter, applause*] Resolution:

Whereas, there are thousands of Negroes in the city and county of Montgom-

---

7. James Lowell Ware (1899–1975) was born in Wetumpka, Alabama. He became pastor of the  
 Trinity Baptist Church in 1941 and remained there for the next thirty years. He was president of the  
 Birmingham Baptist Ministers Conference for twenty-five years and the first African American to run  
 for council in Birmingham, in 1963. He was secretary of the Alabama Baptist State Convention for  
 many years. Emory Overton Jackson (1908–1975), born in Buena Vista, Georgia, edited the *Birmingham  
 World*, Alabama's leading black newspaper.

5 Dec  
1955

ery who ride buses owned and operated by the Montgomery City Lines, Incorporated, and

Whereas, said citizens have been riding buses owned and operated by said company over a number of years, and

Whereas, said citizens, over a number of years, and on many occasions, have been insulted, embarrassed (*Yeah*), and have been made to suffer great fear of bodily harm (*That's right*) by drivers of buses owned and operated by said bus company (*Yeah*), and

Whereas, the drivers of said buses have never requested a white passenger riding on any of its buses to relinquish his seat and to stand so that a Negro may take his seat. [*applause*] However, said drivers have on many occasions, too numerous to mention, requested Negro passengers on said buses to relinquish their seats and to stand so that white passengers may take their seats [*applause*], and

Whereas, said citizens of Montgomery city and county pay their fares just as all other persons who are passengers on said buses (*All right*) and are entitled to fair and equal treatment (*Yeah*) [*applause*], and

Whereas, there has been any number of arrests of Negroes caused by drivers of said buses, and they are constantly put in jail for refusing to give white passengers their seats and to stand. (*All right*) [*applause*]

Whereas, in March of 1955, a committee of citizens did have a conference with one of the officials of the said bus line, at which time said officials arranged a meeting between attorneys representing the Negro citizens of this city and attorneys representing the Montgomery City Lines, Incorporated, and the city of Montgomery, and

Whereas, the official of the bus line promised that as a result of the meeting between said attorneys he would issue a statement of policy clarifying the law with reference to the seating of Negro passengers on the buses, and

Whereas, said attorneys did have a meeting and did discuss the matter of clarifying the law; however, the official of said bus lines did not make public the statement as to its policy with reference to the seating of passengers on its buses, and

Whereas, since that time, at least two ladies have been arrested for an alleged violation of the city segregation law with reference to bus travel, and

Whereas, said citizens of Montgomery city and county believe that they have been grossly mistreated as passengers on the buses owned and operated by said bus company (*All right*) in spite of the fact that they are in the majority with reference to the number of passengers riding the said buses. [*applause*]

In light of these observations, be it therefore resolved as follows:

Number One. That the citizens of Montgomery are requesting that every citizen in Montgomery, regardless of race, color, or creed, to refrain from riding buses owned and operated in the city of Montgomery by the Montgomery Lines, Incorporated [*applause*], until some arrangement has been worked out [*applause*] between said citizens and the Montgomery City Lines, Incorporated.

Now I'm reading it slow and I want you to hear every word of it.

Number Two. That every person owning or who has access to an automobile will use their automobiles in assisting other persons to get to work without charge. [*applause*]

Number Three. That the employees, I repeat, that the employers of persons whose employees live a great distance from them, as much as possible, afford transportation for your own employees. [*applause*]

5 Dec  
1955

That the Negro citizens of Montgomery are ready and willing to send a delegation of citizens to the Montgomery City Lines, Incorporated, to discuss their grievances and to work out a solution for the same. (*All right*) [*applause*]

Be it further resolved that we have not—I said, we have not, we are not, and we have no intentions of—using any unlawful means or any intimidation (*Go ahead*) to persuade persons not to ride the Montgomery City Lines buses. [*applause*] However, we call upon your conscience (*All right*), both moral and spiritual, to give your wholehearted support (*That's right*) to this worthy undertaking. [*applause*] We believe we have a just complaint, and we are willing to discuss this matter with the proper authorities. (*Yes*) [*applause*]

Thus ends the resolution.<sup>8</sup> [*applause*] Dr. King, prayerfully, spiritually, sincerely, I wish to offer a motion. I move that this resolution shall be adopted. (*Dr. King, I second the motion*) [*applause*]

[*King:*] It has been moved, it has been moved, and seconded that these recommendations and these resolutions would be accepted and adopted by the citizens of Montgomery. Are you ready for the question? (*Yes*) [*thundering response*]

All in favor, stand on your feet. [*enthusiastic applause*] Opposers do likewise. Opposers do likewise. [*laughter*] There is a prevailing majority.

I certainly want to thank you, my friends, for this tremendous response. [*pause*] My friends, in order that nothing, that we will not be misquoted, and particularly with the resolutions, copies are prepared for the press; so that if the press would like to secure copies, they may do that, so that we will not be misquoted. [*enthusiastic applause*] [*recording interrupted*]

. . . said here this evening because everything is being recorded. Reverend Glasco is here on hand recording everything that is being said, so that we're not doing anything in the dark here. Everything is recorded. [*applause*] Now my friends, I just want to say once more to you. I've got to leave, I have presided to this point. It so happens that we have a group of very fine men who can do a much better job than I've done, and we're gonna let them do it. You know, we preachers have many engagements sometime. And I've got to go speak to the fathers and sons of this city; so that I'm gonna have to leave.

But just before leaving I want to say this. I want to urge you. You have voted, and you have done it with a great deal of enthusiasm, and I want to express my appreciation to you, on behalf of everybody here. Now let us go out to stick together and stay with this thing until the end. [*applause*] Now it means sacrificing, yes, it

---

8. A mimeographed version of these resolutions also included, in King's handwriting, the three demands the MIA presented to the bus company and city commissioners at an 8 December 1955 meeting arranged by the Alabama Council on Human Relations: "Better treatment and more courteous actions"; "That the seating arrangements be changed to a first come-first serve basis"; "That Negro Bus drivers be employed, especially on predominately Negro lines. Since about 75 percent of the income for the bus company come from Negroes, some of that money should come back to them." On the verso of the document King added, "Bus drivers to complement Negro Police in Colored district. There are times that Negro Policemen serve whites"; "On the predominately Negro routes, run every other bus special for Negroes" (MIA, Resolution with Proposals, 8 December 1955). On 9 December 1955 the *Montgomery Advertiser* reported that Jack Crenshaw, counsel for Montgomery City Lines, suggested having an exclusively Negro bus (see Tom Johnson, "4-Hour Huddle; Bus Boycott Conference Fails to Find Solution," *Montgomery Advertiser*, 9 December 1955).



5 Dec  
1955

means sacrificing at points. But there are some things that we've got to learn to sacrifice for. (*Yeah*) And we've got to come to the point that we are determined not to accept a lot of things that we have been accepting in the past.

So I'm urging you now. We have the facilities for you to get to your jobs, and we are putting, we have the cabs there at your service. Automobiles will be at your service, and don't be afraid to use up any of the gas. If you have it, if you are fortunate enough to have a little money, use it for a good cause. Now my automobile is gonna be in it, it has been in it, and I'm not concerned about how much gas I'm gonna use. (*That's right*) I want to see this thing work.

And we will not be content until oppression is wiped out of Montgomery, and really out of America. We won't be content until that is done. We are merely insisting on the dignity and worth of every human personality. And I don't stand here, I'm not arguing for any selfish person. I've never been on a bus in Montgomery. But I would be less than a Christian if I stood back and said, because I don't ride the bus, I don't have to ride a bus, that it doesn't concern me. [*ap- plause*] I will not be content. I can hear a voice saying, "If you do it unto the least of these, my brother, you do it unto me."<sup>9</sup> [*applause*]

And I won't rest, I will face intimidation, and everything else, along with these other stalwart fighters for democracy and for citizenship. We don't mind it, so long as justice comes out of it. And I've come to see now that as we struggle for our rights, maybe some of them will have to die. But somebody said, if a man doesn't have something that he'll die for, he isn't fit to live. [*enthusiastic applause*]

Now, let me tell you this. You know, it takes money to do what we're about to do. We can't do it clapping hands now and we can't do it saying "Amen." (*That's right*) That's not enough. That is, that encourages the speaker to go on, but that isn't enough. We need money to do this and we're gonna have to get ourselves some money tonight. And we're gonna ask everybody here, that's everybody outside and inside, to get ready to make a contribution to this cause. (*That's right*) And the money will be well used. And the committee will tell you, someone will tell you what it will be used for. Now, we're asking Reverend Bonner to come here, from the First CME Church, to come and take this offering. I'm gonna ask Brother Nixon to assist him and we're gonna, I'm gonna ask—huh?—Brother Matthews, also. Where's Brother Matthews? Yeah. Brother Matthews here, the president of our NAACP, to come here and assist.<sup>10</sup> Now I want to say this. We're gonna need somebody to go outside and collect money. So that I'm gonna ask about, we'd say about ten people, I'm gonna ask ten of the ministers of the city to assist us in taking this offering. [*Rev. Bonner begins calling out names*] My friends, let me say this. Just a moment, Reverend Bonner, we don't want anybody to leave until this is over. I'm gonna leave mine as I leave, and this will continue. Reverend Bennett will continue in presiding. I'm sorry I have to leave, but I'm certainly happy to see your enthusiasm.

At. MLKJrP-GAMK: Box 107.

9. King quotes from Matthew 25:40: "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"

10. Robert L. Matthews, president of the Montgomery NAACP branch, would serve on the MIA executive board.