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# King of new york: northern patronage and support for reverend martin luther king, jr. and the southern christian leadership conference, 1957-1963.

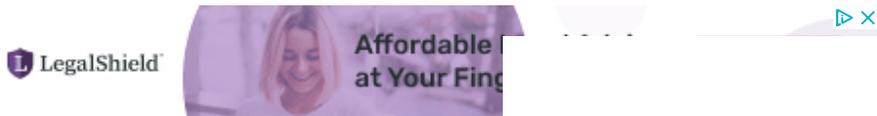
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Although his Atlanta heritage and birthright reared Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a "Georgia Peach," his intellectual maturation at Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University, along with frequent and spontaneous visits along the east coast endeared him to the core of the "Big Apple."

As another chapter in the long projected quest for self-determination and democratic inclusion, the transportation boycott in Montgomery was not an anomaly. The African American community had been petitioning against segregated transport systems since the nineteenth century.



As the bus demonstration lingered from one season to the next, the financial strain of tires, gasoline, traffic fines, bail, and litigation expenses the MIA issued appeal for funds from external donors.

Armed with the civil disobedient protest strategy of satyagraha the MIA secured its demands for an integrated bus system in 1956. This victory did not come without cost.

Embarking on a series of public speaking engagements, King capitalized on his charismatic notoriety and cult of personality status. As a young upstart, he was careful not to tread too heavily on NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins's territory.

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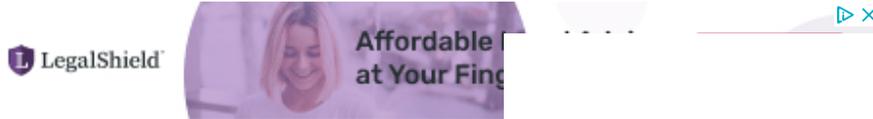
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on the lookout Watching for something or someone. A: 'What are you guys doing?' ... [Watch Video](#)

With the benefit of the collective expertise of Randolph, Rustin, Levison, and Baker, King establish his and the SCLC's legitimacy by amassing an extensive potential donor list of influential individuals. Modeling multiple city speaking tours similar to that of evangelist Reverend Billy Graham, during the spring of 1958 King addressed southern emigres and sympathetic northerners in churches, lodge halls, and auditoriums throughout the Greater New York Area. Wednesday, April 29 [th] he spoke at Cornerstone Baptist Church, in Brooklyn. The following evening he made an appearance at Reverend Dr. Sandy F. Ray's Grace Baptist Church, in Mt. Vernon. On Friday, May 1 [st] he spoke at Reverend Shelton Edward Doles's Convent Avenue Baptist Church, 145 [th] Street. Tuesday, May 5 [th] parishioners at Reverend M.L. Wilson Calvary Baptist Church, 111-10 New York Boulevard in Long Island, received King. On Monday May 11 [th] King made an 8:00 appearance at Thessalonian Baptist Church, 915 Stabbins Avenue, in the Bronx. In the spirit of inter-organizational cooperation Baker, who had at one time served as NAACP Director of Branches, proposed to local branch officer Reverend Thomas Kilgore to hold a joint fundraiser and voter registration rally at Friendship Baptist Church on 144 West 13 [st] Street.(1)



Having recently penned his account of the demonstrations in Montgomery, King promoted book signings of Stride Toward Freedom at local bookstores. During a scheduled stop at L.M. Blumsteins' in Harlem, King was stabbed in the chest with a letter opener by Isola Ware Curry on September 20, 1958. Forced to cancel all fundraising appearances and speaking engagements for the next three months King convalesced in New York at the home of Reverend Ray. While Randolph administered the telegrams and letters of support, Levison organized the flow of unsolicited donations that arrived in mass from people like Mrs. Anne Wimby from 538 East 84 [th] Street who contributed \$3 towards King's hospital expenses.

Several weeks after the stabbing, "In Friendship," forwarded a \$314 donation at the request of Mrs. Coretta Scott King. Along with the Christian Action, members of Friendship Baptist Church, and "In Friendship" orchestrated a joint fundraising campaign that grossed \$4,000. With administrative expenses steadily mounting, a year later the SCLC had yet to institute a systematic fundraising program. Caustic that "the organization is now burning the furniture to keep the house warm," Levison was concerned about the SCLC's fiscal instability. If disbanded due to the exhaustion of funds, it would be difficult to revive because it would be demoralized and publicly discredited. Levison suggested that King approach United Auto Workers (UAW) President, Walter Reuther as a potential source of funding. (2)

Understanding the reason for the SCLC's financial success was compelling. Once formerly overshadowed by the prevalence of the NAACP and the Urban League, King's brush with death endeared him in the hearts and minds of many. Although headquartered in Atlanta, the SCLC established an administrative presence in New York. With Levison as a volunteer and Rustin as a part-time administrator, the northern office developed pamphlets, brochures, newsletter editorials, and newspaper ads to present the organization's activities in words and pictures. Scheduling King on whirlwind speaking tours and public rallies, on May 17, 1959, an audience of 3,500 attendees appeared at Thessalonian Baptist Church in the Bronx. (3) King reported to Nelson that the New York fund public tour netted \$7,000 in contributions, which was "some two thousand dollars more than anticipated." (4)

As the methodical grassroots protests continued to erode the recalcitrant practices of Jim Crow, the tangible victories in the areas of education, enfranchisement, and places of public accommodation, led to mounting litigation expenses and retributive attacks. Overt violent and economic repressive tactics indicated the degree to which dismantling southern segregation was not without costs. Moreover King's increased visibility also amplified the SCLC's operational expenses. The cost of sending telegrams, printing, postage, travel, operational expenses, publicity, office equipment, and other costs consumed at least 65% of the organization's operational budget. In 1960, Alabama officials still smarting from the ruling in Montgomery charged King with perjury and tax evasion by claiming he received \$45,000 income in 1958. Dr. King contended that this was not personal income but monies raised and spent for transportation, hotels, and other expenses incurred during the transportation boycott.

Levison and Rustin implemented a series of savvy public relations campaigns that organized a collation of influential entertainers, political and legal advisors, activists, ministers, laypersons, and others into the "Committee to Defend Martin Luther King, Jr." Headquartered at 312 W. 125 [th] Street the committee was convened by Chairman Randolph, Executive Secretary Rustin, and Harry Belafonte. Targeting churches, labor and civic organizations the group's national fund-raising campaign hoped to raise \$200,000 for King's defense and to sustain the SCLC's southern voter registration campaign.

Writing, "It is essential that every American realize that the charges against Rev. King are vicious and without the slightest foundation in fact," Randolph added, "The sole purpose of the charges against Rev. King is to take away from the South and from the nation at large a great and revered spiritual leader whose only crime is his selfless and incorruptible struggle on behalf of democracy and equal rights for all people in the Southland." As Chairman of the Committee's Cultural Division, Harry Belafonte added, "This case is on national and international significance. We who are artists and writers have a duty to bring it and the message of Dr. King's struggle for human rights to the attention of all mankind." On March 14, individuals such as Dr. and Mrs. Corliss Lamont of 450 Riverside Drive contributed \$1,000 to the Committee. Within a week of its formation, the Committee raised \$10,000.

The onset of student sit-in demonstrations during the spring of 1960, divided King's attentions between his indictment and the direct action protests. With no field staff and very little money the majority of SCLC's operational budget was used to absorb the mounting litigation expenses. While King, Wilkins, and Lester Granger of the Urban League caustically tolerated one another for the sake of mutual cooperation, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell of Abyssinian Baptist Church was acrimonious. As an elected official,

Congressman Powell basked in his reputation as a social maverick and a political outlier. Although he was supportive of King during the Montgomery demonstrations, and they traveled together to Ghana in 1957, he resented that the dramatic demonstrations in the South had upshadowed the boycott campaigns he initiated during the 1940s. In the summer of 1960, Powell threatened to besmirch King's reputation by telling the press he and Ruston were involved in a homosexual affair unless King called off the plan to demonstrate at the upcoming Democratic National Convention. (5) The incident did not garner much attention, and King appeared to smooth Powell's ruffled feathers by making occasional fundraising appearances at Abyssinian Baptist Church.

Bearing financial responsibility for the students' legal defense the SCLC mastered the art of "charismatic chaos." Purchasing a full-page advertisement in the New York Times on March 29 entitled "Heed Their Voices," donors were cajoled to respond quickly to King and the students' defense. The ad signed by SCLC officers Reverends Ralph Abernathy, Joseph Lowery, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Solomon Seay, followed by a flood of appeal letters resulted in a number of legal and financial reverberations until 1964. Inundated by increasing litigation expenses, the SCLC harnessed additional support from its many organizational affiliates. With sole purpose to marry the freedom struggle with that of the uphill struggle to unionize, the divisions of New York laborers launched "Labor Division of the Committee to Defend Dr. King" a citywide fundraising drive:

Even more significant, though, than the lessons we learn from Labor's history, is the active support we are getting from Labor today—in the form of picket lines, bail fund loans, and petitions. The maturing struggle in the South however has taken on an unprecedented breadth and scope, far beyond our present financial ability to direct it effectively. Hence, the greatest immediate need is for direct financial help ... May the great bond of brotherhood between Labor and the Civil Rights forces ever continue to deepen, so that together we may advance the frontiers of democracy and, in the not too distant future, transform our America, this blessed home of the brave, into a land of the truly free. (6)

On May 17 [th], the New York Central Labor Council organized a fundraiser in the garment center and solicited individual collections from the shops. Symbolizing a change in the way unions solicited, this new method generated larger sums from union treasuries because typically union officials fulfilled their contributory obligations with annual pledges of \$50 or \$100. Several months later, the news of King's arrest during a sit-in demonstration at a cafeteria at the Rich department store in Atlanta, promoted a wave of financial contributions from labor organizations. Leon J. Davis, President of New York's Local 1199, canvassed the employees at the Retail Drug Union and raised \$250 "as a small token of their readiness and willingness to assume greater responsibility in the crusade for equal rights."

In a letter to King, Davis wrote: I sincerely hope that by the time this is received you will have been freed so that you can continue to provide the magnificent and courageous leadership that has inspired all decent-minded Americans. Our members in the voluntary hospitals, who are perhaps the lowest paid workers in our city, have reacted immediately to the outrage committed against the students and yourself they have contributed nickels and dimes in order to demonstrate their desire to stand and be counted in this nationwide fight for dignity and decency. (7)

Initially plagued by administrative instability, organizational inefficiency, lack of publicity, and inadequate fundraising techniques, the New York office used the emergency appeals to create the resources necessary to sustain the demonstrators, operate a bail fund, sponsor mass rallies, and purchase newspaper ads. Shortly after Rustin left the New York office Maya Angelou briefly served as SCLC's Northern Coordinator. Organizing "The Cabaret for Freedom" benefit at the Village Gate opening night featured a star-studded cast that included Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Sidney Poitier, and several other headliners. (8) Following this event the Harlem "Night of Stars for Freedom" benefit concert was another successful fundraising venture.

When King was acquitted of the perjury charges in the income tax case, the fundraising Committee formed for his defense was reconstituted as a permanent body known as the "Emergency Committee for the Southern Freedom Struggle" and thereby consolidated all fundraising activity on the East Coast. (9) During a 10 1/2 period (October 1960 to August 1961) they fashioned the nearly 100,000 names of mainly unsolicited northern contributors into 12,000 coded addressograph plates, "Dollars for Dignity" envelope campaigns, coordinated benefit concerts, and planned special events. The systematic administration of mass rallies, coupled with the dissemination of effective public relations schemes produced a groundswell of responses based on the dramatic confrontations and exploits of the mass media. After Angelou's departure in 1961, Levison and Jack O'Dell, a graduate student at NYU's School of Management, directed the office's fundraising campaigns. Adapting a fundraising approach utilized by social welfare agencies, the office canvassed donors at a minimum expense, and its efficiency produced a return rate that was sometimes as high as 80 percent. Coordinated with one paid administrator, the office was largely serviced by a number of undisclosed volunteers who were enlisted to run errands, stuff envelopes, answer correspondence, make phone calls, schedule events, distribute leaflets, and provide technical research assistance to local affiliates. Without the expense of salaries, the office grossed \$80,181. The \$11,358 in operational expenditures, evidence such as the weekly amount of \$21 to compensate volunteers for coffee, taxis, and other miscellaneous items demonstrates the office's efficiency. (10)

For the fiscal year September 1, 1960 through August 31, 1961, SCLC's total income received was \$193,328, of which \$4,747 came from labor unions. The New York office raised \$34,164, which included \$22,577 from a January 27 [th] benefit, "Tribute to Martin Luther King" at Carnegie Hall, and sponsored by Belafonte, Randolph, and Reverend Gardner Taylor of Concord Baptist; and \$11,587 from a fundraising dinner. The "Committee to Aid the Southern Freedom Struggle," featured celebrities Maya Angelou, Sammy Davis, Frank Sinatra, Sidney Poitier, Mahalia Jackson, Count Basic, Dean Martin, Jan Murray, Nipsey Russell, Carmen McRae, George Kirby, and Ruth Brow grossed \$53,000. (11)

Despite accolades for King, he and his organization were not immune to repressive attacks. In a dual attempt to save face and to bankrupt the SCLC, Montgomery, Alabama City Commissioner, L.B. Sullivan brought a libel suit against the four ministers who signed the advertisement and the New York Times. Sullivan secured a million dollar judgment and the ministers' salaries were garnished, their automobiles were impounded, and their personal properties were sold at auction.

On February 21, 1961, the ministers filed a complaint in the Federal District Court of Montgomery, Alabama charging Governor John Patterson and other state, county and city officials of denying them of their constitutional rights, and subjecting them to periodic intimidation, harassment and violence in an effort to impede civil rights campaigns. (12)

Since 1955, the FBI had long suspected Levison and O'Dell of being engaged in subversive Communist activities. Although investigations against them were unfounded, O'Dell was temporarily reassigned to assist with the voter registration program in Atlanta while also continuing to coordinate the fundraising program. (13) With the departure of O'Dell and Levison, the New York office and its direct mail system was left in total disarray. In fact in a monitored conversation between Levison and an unidentified female, Levison stated that by mid-May "there was no leadership for the SCLC in New York" and instead what they had he reclaimed, was, -a workshop for fund raising." (14)

In 1961, Virginia affiliate Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker joined the organization as Executive Director and Jim Wood was hired as Director of Public Relations. Building upon the momentum of Levison and O'Dell, Walker and Wood worked with the Harry Walker Agency of New York to professionalize operations in more timely and efficient manner. King who was by now traveling six to eight months out of the year, had his haphazard touring schedule reconfigured to limit his speaking engagements to Monday afternoon, evening, and Tuesday morning. Customarily the events were free and open to the general public, and as long as the offerings generated up to \$3,000, it made every appearance worthwhile. (15)

A June 17 [th] article in the New York Times entitled, "Governor Attends Rally with Dr. King," reported that Governor Rockefeller was hosting MLK and would be accompanying him to two local fund-raising meetings. Traveling to Albany in the Governor's private plane, they drove to a reception at the Sheraton Ten Eyck Hotel, where they dined with 300 persons. Afterwards, they attended a fundraising rally at Wilborn Temple.

The increased of private philanthropic and public support allowed the organization to broaden the programmatic scope of its voter registration activities. By May 1962 the issue of charitable deductions further tested the status of the SCLC's fundraising machinery. Former National Urban League president, Theodore W. Kheel, and attorneys Clarence Jones, Harry H. Watchel, and William Kunstler established the "Gandhi Society for Human Rights, Inc." Modeled after the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund, the organization was designed to raise funds and sought to offer a tax-deductible financial assistance program for legal projects. Appointing King as its Chairman and Jones as Acting Executive Director, the Gandhi Society's initial directive was to overturn the libelous judgments against Abernathy, Shuttlesworth, Lowery, and Seay. (16)

By October 1962, the direct mail campaign generated more than \$4,500 to support their endeavors. (17) Enfranchisement campaigns were not the only reasons for soliciting funds. In the fall of 1962 the SCLC initiated fundraising appeals on behalf of several burnt churches in Southwest Georgia that were bombed because they were the center of activity for voter registration clinics. The organization gave Reverend J.D. Ousley \$500 toward the cost of rebuilding Shady Grove Baptist Church. When Athlete, segregationist barrier breaker, and activist Jackie Robinson, who was now serving as a spokesman for the Chock Full O'Nuts Company learned about the series of arson he addressed 4,000 attendants at a voter registration rally about the situation in southwest Georgia. Armed with a \$100 pledge for Dr. King, Robinson was anxious to have the sanctuaries rebuilt. Soon after being appointed as the Chairman of the "Ad Hoc Committee to Rebuild the Churches," by the week's end Robinson also enlisted heavyweight champions Floyd Patterson and Archie Moore to serve as members of the national fundraising campaign.

Renamed the "Mt. Olive Baptist Church Building Fund," a fundraising office was established at 425 Lexington Avenue. The projected financial goal of \$25,000 was to be shared among Reverends Ousley, William Boyd of Mt. Mary Baptist Church, and F.S. Swaggott of Mt. Olive Baptist Church. Recognizing that northern migration did not shield African American communities from violence and personal attacks, Robinson reminded them that their political and economic gains obligated them to accept some level of personal responsibility for the welfare of their southern brethren. While the general public produced contributions and pledges that estimated \$10,000 within one week, Robinson was disappointed that the majority of funds were received from White contributors. (18) Although grateful for the funds, he insisted that African American be more self-sufficient towards causes on their own behalf:

If any more churches are destroyed, I think I can safely say that the Negro people of the North will help you to rebuild them as fast as they are destroyed. If you [southern African Americans] have the heart, which you have, to remain on the front lines, then we [northern African Americans] have the decency, from the trenches to supply the ammunition. (19) Believing them to be stakeholders with a vested interest in the struggle for civil rights, Robinson acknowledged the innumerable efforts of those African Americans who contributed cash offerings, volunteered their time, and lent their expertise. Highlighting the commitments of female office workers who operated the machines, composed letters, and performed telephone solicitations well into the night, Robinson also recognized the contributions of Frank Schiffman, owner of Harlem's Apollo Theater, and employees at Chock Full O'Nuts. As a highly visible member of the community, Schiffman raised "\$1,000 in the form of nickels, dimes, and quarters" between performances, and at least 1,350 Chock Full O'Nuts employees forwarded an undisclosed contribution. Elatedly, Robinson recalled an incident in which a young man named Fred Young eloquently inspired attendants at a Brooklyn meeting in the Brownsville area to contribute \$600. (20)

Reverend Sandy F. Ray, Chairman of the Special Committee New York Friends of SCLC, forwarded more than \$11,000 to Reverend Thomas Kilgore, of New York's Friendship Baptist Church, for the protestors. (21) Enclosing 117 checks, and two "Dollars for Freedom" envelopes that totaled \$2,946 from twin rallies held on Wednesday December 12, Arthur M. Golden, treasurer of the Long Island Committee for Human Rights 38 Old Country Road, Garden City, New York also promised to forward a second contribution of \$8,000 minus \$1,000 in expenses within the following week. (22) Through ad hoc fundraising committees, the SCLC generated additional contributions in the amounts of \$4,500 from Reverend Kilgore, and two checks totaling \$12,500 from Dr. Ray. (23) The SCLC's treasury report for the period of October 22, 1962-July 31, 1963 confirmed that minus expenses the event generated nearly \$28,000. (24)

The receipt of an appeal letter, brochure, newsletter, press release, or through conversations with relatives, neighbors, or co-workers; contributors were prompted to do something. Opposed to the receipt of sporadic mailings, RC Wood of All-Tropic Cigar Imports, Inc. at 82 Beaver Street, NY suggested that the SCLC formulate monthly reminders because "donors who are busy with many items of life can't recall whether and when the last contribution was made." (25) Enclosing a contribution, on April 3 Wood contacted King again to suggest a system of monthly pledge by way of a systematic self-addressed envelope. Writing, "I'd like to contribute \$5 a month (\$60 a year), he added, "In looking through my check book, I see I sent nothing in January and \$10 in Feb. It's a bit haphazard this way."

In a March 5, 1963 letter to King Mrs. Margaret Bowser of 671 Westchester Ave, Bronx, NY wrote: Whether it be a sense of guilt, the desire to counter of public hostility, or the seeking of recognition, approval, or social

"A few weeks ago when you where in my New York City at my church (Abyssinian) at that time I didn't have anything to make a donation to you. I wish you would accept this small donation now. I got to church at 9:25 and found standing room only. That was one time I didn't mind standing one bit. I enjoyed every minute of it and could of listen to you longer. May God bless you and give you strength and health to carry on your work. I have five grand children and your work will make it a better USA for them.

acceptance, numerous churches, individuals, and labor organizations from across the country orchestrated fundraising campaigns in response to aid the protestors in Birmingham. On April 15, Easter Sunday, Ruth and Peter Kahn informed the SCLC that Reverend Ernest Werner of the First Unitarian Church in Ithaca, New York, had petitioned several churches to initiate funding drives on behalf of King and the organization. (26)

Dear Friend, Martin Luther King, Jr. is in jail again as of this writing, and so are several Southern clergymen and many others who are determined to continue to integrate and register voters ... We have much to learn about the difference between genuine support and merely token support, not to mention the surprising costs of maintaining a dynamic congregation, we rest our own financial hopes on the annual canvass and volunteer pledge. We need your support and welcome it, but without pressure. The fact is that Dr. King and his people need our supporting hands now. I know that income tax time has just passed, and the cupboard is bare-well, almost bare...

Exploiting the dramatic confrontations of Birmingham on May 7, the SCLC purchased a four-page advertisement in the New York Times that showed the world the harrowing events of snarling police dogs, police battalions, water cannons, mass arrests, and the physical abuse of numerous brave and courageous men, women, and children. The relentless public relations campaigns in the mailbox, in the newspaper, and on television triggered philanthropic activity from local communities, individuals, fraternal orders, and social groups. At the cost of \$6,000 the ad generated a watershed of donations in the amount of \$362,000, mainly from a large majority of liberal northern Whites, African Americans, and labor unions. (27) Sending unending prayers for continuing courage and determination, Maria Cox wrote, "I bow my head in shame as I write this seemingly useless letter and enclose my meager offering. Because I should be there joining in the light for our long overdue freedom." (28) Writing, -It is with a feeling of humility and pride that we enclose our check in the sum of \$100.00 to help in our fight for human dignity not only in the South but in the North, Stanley J. Alexander, of Alexander Realty Company in Brooklyn added, "As Negroes, my wife and I are greatly indebted to people like yourself who have devoted so much of their life so that others may have a better life." (29) After having reading about the concessions in the morning edition of the New York Times., Elaine Bess from the Olsen's Rest Home in Necomset, Long Island, enclosed sentiments along with \$1.00 to aid in the cause for freedom:

...You are a credit to your race. I am Negro and I am glad of it. I wouldn't have it any other way. I live in NY State and there is discrimination here also ... The pay is small but I praise the Lord that I am able to work. I know you are very busy, but I will appreciate a reply to this letter. (30)

Unsure about whom they could contact in Birmingham for fear that the SCLC's correspondence was tampered with, Mrs. Margaret James and Miss Mary Jane Snell of Buffalo wrote that they were motivated by the desire to do something more:

Please let us know in what way we in Buffalo can be of aide to our heroic brothers in Birmingham, Alabama. Please write, or wire, or telephone collect any weekday after 6pm all day Saturday and Sunday. We want to play a small part in the struggle of our people for liberty. We shall await your reply with the greatest anxiety. (31)

The May 7 full-page advertisement in the Times created a watershed of donations and sympathetic letters that far surpassed any previous fundraising campaigns. Despite of the fact that donors were so compelled

by the demonstrations, Levison admitted that while the ad brought in \$1,000 per day, the New York office should promote a strong leadership presence instead of operating a workshop for raising funds. (32) Making headlines across the nation and around the world, SCLC received letters and donations from a number of sympathetic young people who admired the students' courageous display of bravery. Students and faculty at the Barlow School in Armenia, New York staged a one day fast and donated \$237, the equivalence of one evening's meal. (33) Beryle Banfield of New York City collected offerings from teachers at her school. A conversation with her neighbor about the financial situation in Birmingham prompted the neighbor to solicit a \$100 check from her friend. (34)

Sending a \$2.00 check earmarked for legal fees or bail for the demonstrators in Birmingham, Mrs. Maxine Arons of New York City stated, "Northern Negroes also need justice but there is only one Martin Luther King." (35) "By the loving grace and power of Allah the Great Spirit-All Wise-all loving, creative just, abundant one," Abu Bala stated, "I trust that social justice for the oppressed and underprivileged in the South, throughout the USA and elsewhere in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Middle East, etc. will triumph in the near future." Perhaps as a result of his Muslim faith and its strict ascription to tithing, Bakr also forwarded \$3.00:

Having read your letter of forthright appeal and urgency as well as the role of high import that the SCLC, its affiliate ACMHR and other civil rights groups are playing in this high stakes cause of liberation and social justice for Afro or colored Americans and other downtrodden underprivileged Americans ... Without further ado in response to your urgent plea and quest for social justice for the oppressed and underprivileged in the Commonwealth of the United States... (36)

On May 18 [th] the residents in apartment 5F, New York City held an impromptu "Emergency Party to Back Birmingham."

Printing a flier that read, "We can't all go on Freedom Rides; we can't all risk our lives in this Battle of Birmingham. BUT WE CAN ALL HELP! Money is urgently needed by the SCLC, led by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. IN THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM NOW!" they solicited \$2.00 donations for individuals and \$3.50 for couples. (37)

Having previously pledged \$300 to the campaign to rebuild churches in Southwest Georgia, Guy R. Brewer, a member of the Board of Directors United Democrats, 11 [th] A.D. Queens, Inc., in Jamaica, New York contacted King to inform him of present and future funding drives. "I want to tell you something that thrills me greatly. We of United had a fashion show on this past Sunday and we made a pitchentirely unannounced and impromptu for Birmingham. The response was \$250." The upcoming New York State Elks Convention conference scheduled to be held in Syracuse May 28-31 were planning a civil rights program which would include a mass rally to aid the demonstrations in Birmingham. (38)

Forwarding a \$200 check, Mrs. Eddie Mae Tatem, President and Velma H Wright Financial Secretary of the Brooklyn Club of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., wrote: At first glance, the funding appeals appear to be confined to hysterical cries of desperation and poverty. Upon closer inspection, the letters embodied the organization's objectives and provided logistical facts as to why support was needed. Ensuring donors that civil rights progress was being actualized, the SCLC conferred that contributions would serve

Gentlemen, we too are deeply concerned with the question of civil rights. We commend your organization very highly for your quietly determined and heroic crusade for freedom, justice and human dignity. Enclosed is a check for \$200 as a token of our appreciation to you for the courage you have shown in leading the Battle for Birmingham. (39)

a higher purpose. While donor responses satisfied the Movement's financial demands, check writing though generous, was spontaneous and infrequent, yet failed to elicit the same level of commitment of volunteers who gave of their bodies, expertise, and time. As the tidal wave of six weeks of demonstrations, mass meetings, and economic boycotts whittled away at the foundation of southern segregation, the community's nearly unflappable solidarity represented a persistent badge of courage.

Recognizing that Americans were generous by nature, the SCLC's direct action campaigns stirred a bevy of human emotions and were responsible for attracting a vast majority of new members. As the tidal wave of demonstrations swept through the South, contributors throughout northern cities learned of the organization's activities after having received an appeal letter, read a newspaper article, or attending a rally. Motivated by the "desire to do something," donors felt compelled to write a check, and many contributors orchestrated unsolicited fundraising campaigns. Expressing such sentiments as "this is just a drop in the bucket," and "please accept this widow's mite," individuals, clubwomen, business, fraternal, and professional organizations orchestrated spontaneous fundraising drives at local churches, community organizations, and places of employment that generated thousands of dollars for the Birmingham campaign. However, not all calls for support were received with a token of obligation or optimism. Peter Krauss of Brooklyn, New York, wrote:

I regret that I cannot send you any money in that I believe that humans have enough rights. Now I am more interested in protecting niggers and other sub-species. I should like

In a four-page letter to the Amsterdam News, Mrs. O.C.D. McNeil of Los Angeles, California, chastised King for what she believed to be grandstanding fundraising campaigns and overbearing attempts to barrage his way into the political spotlight:

to set up an SCPA that would require the licensing of all niggers and the liquidation of strays and un-owned niggers. This is the only way to keep our streets clean and safe. Curb all niggers! Ours for a strong White Nation. (40)

There are many of us who are Negroes who feel that even though you consider yourself a Negro leader, why do you insist on being a Presidential advisor? There are many people who will keep their country and their people only when they can keep their pockets full of money. Many people think of only money, money, and more money. They become so selfish and self-centered. Negroes are becoming more politically wise. I have read in the Negro press that Negro leaders in Birmingham did not want you and Abernathy there. I also read they did not want you in Albany, GA. According to the Herald Examiner you claim you are going back to Albany ... Do you really know how much money you collect each week, each month, each year?

According to today's L.A. Times and Herald Examiner the president will use troops if the Governor pursues his course. Do you realize the University of Alabama is not your problem? Did it ever cross your mind the Justice Dept. has been working on the problem since 1961? Did you know the federal government is not going to let you give it advice? It is a pity that you would continue to make a fool of yourself. When are we going to learn that we do not have all the answers. (41)

Ralph E McCarthy of Rochester, New York wrote:

I have read with disgust and disappointment and pain your article and speeches advocating so-called civil rights and integration (phony). The major premise of the civil righter and integrationist is false. Therefore, my conclusions based on it are false. I wish such so-called leaders will stop misleading our Black peoples. Their philosophy of leadership is based on 1) the dependence on the white man (as though he were God) 2) a complete lack of knowledge and understanding of the history of the Black man. 3) retention of the slave mentality 4) begging the white man to accept us ... Please I beg all of our Negro leaders to call a unity meeting to include all of the civil rights groups including the Black Nationalists and Black Muslims. Ralph E. McCarthy. P.S. If we are united, we don't need the white man! From unity comes strength in pooling our own spiritual, educational, material, and natural resources. Do not let token civil rights and phony integration fool us or divide us! (42)

With modest beginnings in 1957, King's meteoric rise catapulted him and the SCLC as the face of the Movement. Capitalizing on the psychological climate of the Movement, by 1962, it had modernized its mission by orchestrating sophisticated public relations and advertising tactics that combined prophetic prose with persuasive business practices. With the increased its political agency, the organization's need for additional capital forged cross-fertilizations of "giving among friends" and "giving among strangers." By 1963 the SCLC reached cause celebre status. Stimulating large sums of money through small gifts from broad segments of the population it operated with an executive staff of public relations executives and professional fundraisers on both coasts. From September 1962 through August 1963, the SCLC received \$741,653 in revenue, with an estimated \$222,169 derived from freedom rallies, and \$10,768 from the annual conventions. (43) Reverend Thomas Kilgore confirmed that the \$6,000 four-page New York Times ad roughly generated \$362,000, mainly from a large majority of liberal northern Whites and some African Americans. (44)

Deciding that the New York office would assume responsibility for all fundraising and the maintenance of the contributors' list, and the Atlanta headquarters would be responsible for coordinating the public relations lists and newsletter mailings, junior staff member Ruth Bailey was reassigned from Atlanta to direct the New York in the fall of 1963 to streamline operations to the efficient state in which they once were. Having received virtually no supervision or support, Bailey through overwhelmed by the Herculean task set before her, was very instrumental in the planning and orchestration of celebrity benefits that included Josephine Baker, a screening of Sidney Poitier's "Lilies of the Field," and coordinating the "Key Women" of Long Island event, which netted a \$500 contribution.

Despite the revenue generated from King's speaking engagements, special events, book sales, and direct mail system, operational expenses ran about \$50,000 a month. When attorney Clarence Jones asked Levison to estimate the status of contributor figures, Levison stated that, -contributions were getting worse for some time now. When they first started they were getting \$1.00 for every piece of mail sent out in the mailing program. By December 1963, they were getting \$.50 and now they are getting \$.33 per piece of mail." (45) When Billy Rowe was hired to direct the publicity campaigns he instituted "Put Freedom on Your Payroll" an employee deduction promotion that proposed to annually generate \$1,000,000. (46)

Operating as a fundraising vehicle and designed to ease the financial burden associated with litigation expenses, the Gandhi Society also financially spiraled. Overdrawn by \$400, (47) it remained a financial liability because it never attracted high-end contributors, and its plans to raise \$50,000 a year through the sale of individual memberships never materialized. Long plagued by the absence of proper financial controls, SCLC auditor, Jesse Blanton, persistently complained that the office was inefficient and wasteful. In short, there was no staffing accountability for misspent funds for motels, car rentals, and unauthorized trips. By May 1964, the Gandhi Society had accumulated \$50,000 in unpaid debts. (48) On March 9, the Supreme Court made the unanimous decision to dismiss the \$500,000 judgment against the ministers and the New York Times. Ruling that the three ministers who'd had their cars seized and sold at a sheriff's sale and the two others who'd had their land seized, would get back \$6,000, the value of confiscated property plus six percent interest. (49)

In the midst of the disappearance and later murders of James Cheney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, and the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Church, New York artist Clifford R. Johnson designed a Christmas card "as a tribute to their martyrdom," and a proposed fundraising project. Expressing lingering sorrow over the tragic death of the four little girls, the card featured drawings of the broken steeple, and the four girls against an imploded background. The caption that read: "This year the freedom tree, the Children of Birmingham." Johnson created the card with a multitude of purposes:

... To keep the memory of the girls alive ... to reawaken the consciousness, and challenge the conscience of those who have lapsed into a coma of apathy ... to focus on the anniversary date of the Birmingham incident as a precluded concentration on the national date of election ... and to provide reparations for the sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the families, and the organizations engaged in the struggle. (50)

By positioning the Civil Rights Movement's activities within the context of the transformative nature of grassroots insurgency, the narrative provides a broader understanding of why philanthropic fundraising is so significant to the culture of United States. Presenting a contextualized overview of African Americans in the Greater New York area's responses to King and the SCLC's request for aid, the article serves as a reflection of the nexus of self-reliance and self-care patronage that has been in practice since the eighteenth century. Scarred by decades of ethnocentrism, political disenfranchisement, physical violence, and economic repression, raising funds on behalf of democratic inclusion holds much credibility in the narrative of their liberation struggles.

Long before these contentious battles became frontpage headline news local communities were sustained by the binding functions of pooled resources of time, talent, and treasure. SCLC annual reports and King's personal correspondence reveal how those foot soldiers' overlapping memberships in churches, fraternal, civic, social, and other organizations' sponsored events, benefits, cabarets, and banquets generated a great deal of manpower and contributions. Instigated by the fact that the community's political interests were neither homogenous nor concrete, a divisive ideology of two opposing sides developed: "those who thought and never did" versus "those who did and never thought."

The objective was not to romanticize the uniqueness or the effectiveness of African American fundraising efforts; but to consider how individuals, organizations, and institutions also responded by giving the intangible resources of voluntarism and in-kind services. While African American were no more or less generous in their response than other types of contributors, overall they are more likely to support an organization if they were able to identify with its cause. Had it not been for the significant, invariable, and unquantifiable levels of material and immaterial African American support, it would have been impossible for the Movement's collective political engagements to be efficiently consolidated and channeled into a legitimate vehicle for social justice on a national level.

- (1.) Ella Baker, letter to Reverend Thomas Kilgore, July 11, 1958, Records of the President's Office, Subgroup II, series 11, subseries I. Box 32, folder 7, SCLC Papers.
- (2.) Stanley Levison, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., November 28, 1958, Box, folder 1-10, King Papers, Boston University
- (3.) The Worker, May 17. 1959.
- (4.) Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., letter to Stanley Levison, May 18, 1959, Box 71a. folder 1xb, King Papers, Boston University.
- (5.) Will Haygood. King of the Cats: The Life and Times of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993, 264
- (6.) "Appeal letter," April 24, 1960, SCLC Papers.
- (7.) Leon J. Davis, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., October 1960, Records of the President's Office, Box 5, folder 44, SCLC Papers
- (8.) Maya Angelou, Heart of a Woman, New York: Random House, 1981, 107
- (9.) "Thank You Letter," Martin Luther King, Jr., October 6. 1960. King Papers, BU.
- (10.) "Report on the New York Office-October 15, 1960 to August 31, 1961," Stanley Levison and Jack O'Dell, Financial Report, Records of the Executive Director and Treasurer. Box 57 folder 11, Subgroup 111, series 1, subseries 2, SCLC Papers. Of this amount \$21,000.00 was raised at the Carnegie Hall Tribute;

- \$13,539 from Benefit Affairs held at Ithaca. Columbia University. Kheel Dinner, and miscellaneous drives; \$53,000 from appeal mailings; \$4,000 Mt. Olivet Church meeting. Expenditures included the following deductions: \$3,200 in salaries, \$6,000 for general promotion (Postage, envelops, for 77,000 letters, preparation for 12,000 plates), \$935 rent, \$575.75 telephone; and \$650.00 in volunteer expenses.
- (11.) "The Committee to Aid the Southern Freedom Struggle," SCLC Newsletter, No. 1, Vol. 1, May 1961 Part III Series IX reel 4 box 122, SCLC Papers
- (12.) "Conspiracy," SCLC Newsletter, Vol. 1, no. 1, May 1961, Records of the Public Relations Department, Box 122, folder 20, SCLC Papers.
- (13.) Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 96.
- (14.) David J. Garrow, *The Martin Luther King, Jr. FBI File*, (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984), reel I, section 3, May 1963.
- (15.) Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities, Organizing for Change*, (Free Press: New York, 1984, 277.
- (16.) "The Formation of the Gandhi Society for Human Rights, Inc.," memorandum, Clarence B. Jones, Box 35, folder 4, Subgroup II, series 111, SCLC Papers.
- (17.) Ralph Abernathy, letter to Dr. William Anderson, October 3, 1962, Records of the Executive Director and Treasurer, Box 34, folder 6, Subgroup II, series III, SCLC Papers.
- (18.) "Support for Rebuilding Bombed African American Churches," November 24, 1962, Records of the Executive Director and Treasurer, Box 53, folder 23, Subgroup III, series I, subseries 1, SCLC Papers.
- (19.) Ibid.
- (20.) Ibid.
- (21.) Ralph Abernathy, Records of the Executive Director and Treasurer, October 6, 1962, Box 34 folder 6, Subgroup II, series III, SCLC Papers.
- (22.) Arthur M. Golden, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., December 16, 1962, Records of the President's Office, Box 53, folder 24.
- (23.) Ralph Abernathy, October 9, 1962, Records of the Executive Director and Treasurer. Box 53, folder 22, Subgroup III, Series I, subseries 1, Records of the Treasurer, SCLC Papers.
- (24.) Cash disbursement in the amount of \$12,870 netted \$12,750 to SCLC with balance of \$96 (Program expenses \$800 for Center, \$3,309 fees and gratuities; \$4,865 advertising, publicity and promotion; \$984 for stationary and printing; \$425 for salaries (hand written explanation gifts to Davis and Lawford, catering for reception, radio tapes, posters, signs, transportation for band, limousines, hotel, salaries for box office attendants, ticket takers, ushers, parking attendants, rest room attendants, custodians)
- (25.) RC Wood letter to Martin Luther King Jr.. February 3, 1963
- (26.) Ruth and Peter Kahn letter to Martin Luther King Jr., April 15, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 6, folder 44, SCLC Papers.
- (27.) "Statement of Income and Expenditures September 1, 1962, August 31, 1963," Records of the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, SCLC Papers.
- (28.) Maria Cox, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 7, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 14, Series 1, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.
- (29.) Stanley J. Alexander, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 7, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 14. Series 1, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.
- (30.) Elaine Bess, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 1 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 15. Series 1, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.
- (31.) Mrs. Margaret James and Miss Mary Jane Snell, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 16, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 15, Series I. subseries 3, SCLC Papers.
- (32.) David J. Garrow, *Martin Luther King and the FBI*, (Frederick: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984), May 13, 1963.
- (31.) Albert G. Rawlins, letter to Martin Luther King Jr., May 10, 1963. Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 14, SCLC Papers.
- (34.) Beryle Banfield, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 8, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 20, SCLC Papers
- (35.) Mrs. Maxine Arons, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 16, 1963. Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 15, Series I, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.
- (36.) Abu Bakr, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 14, 1963. Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 14, Series 1, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.

(37.) Anonymous letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 20, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 8, folder 36.

(38.) Guy Brewer, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 20, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 8, folder 23, Series 1, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.

(39.) Mrs. Eddie Mae Tatem and Velma H. Wright, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 23, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 8, folder 26, Series 1, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.

(40.) Peter Krauss, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 12, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 7, folder 28, SCLC Papers.

(41.) Mrs. O.C.D. McNeil, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., May 25, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 8, folder 7, Series 1, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.

(42.) Ralph E. McCarthy, letter to Martin Luther King, Jr., September 23, 1963, Records of the President's Office, Box 10, folder 7, Series 1, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.

(43.) "Financial Treasurer Report September 1, 1962-August 31, 1963," Ralph Abernathy, Records of the Executive Director and Treasurer, Box 57, folder 17, Subgroup III, series I, subseries 3, SCLC Papers.

(44.) "Statement of Income and Expenditures September 1, 1962, August 31, 1963," Records of the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, SCLC Papers.

(45.) David J. Garrow, The Martin Luther King, Jr. FBI File, (Frederick: University Publications of America. Inc., 1984), reel III, section twelve, May 19, 1964.

(46.) Ibid., reel 11, section eight, January 15, 1964. Describing Rowe as "immoral and no good." a November 20, 1963 FBI transcript identified Rowe as the operator of a public relations firm in New York. Arduously promoting interests in Cuba, Rowe's publicity campaigns featured former boxing champ Joe Louis in a travel promotion for African Americans to Cuba, and Rowe was rumored to have coordinated the arrangements for Castro's stay in Harlem during his trip to America.

(47.) Ibid., reel 11, section eight, January 28, 1964.

(48.) Adam Fairclough, To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr., (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987).142.

(49.) "SCLC Board Members, New York Times Win Reversal in \$500,000 Libel Suit Brought by Ala. Police Official," SCLC Newsletter, Vol. 2, no. 5, February 1964, Records of the Public Relations Department, Series IX reel 4. box 122, SCLC Papers.

(50.) Clifford R. Johnson. letter to Martin Luther King, Jr.. July 11. 1964, Records of the President's Office, reel 8 box 11, SCLC Papers.

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