

From Ella J. Baker

24 Feb
1956

24 February 1956
New York, N.Y.

Ella Baker, veteran civil rights organizer and an NAACP branch president in New York City, was the driving force behind In Friendship, a coordinating group created to aid victims of racial terrorism in the South.¹ Baker enlisted support for the new venture from more than twenty-five political, labor, and religious organizations. During its first year In Friendship not only gave funds to beleaguered activists such as Mississippi NAACP leader Amzie Moore but also organized a New York civil rights support rally in May and a December benefit concert for the bus boycott featuring Coretta Scott King, Harry Belafonte, and Duke Ellington. King noted at the top of the telegram that it was "to be answered," but his response has not been located. King was unable to attend In Friendship's 29 February founding conference to which Baker invites him.

REVEREND MARTIN LUTHER KING JR
309 SOUTH JACKSON AVE OR ST MONTGOMERY ALA

A LARGE NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS AND DISTINGUISHED INDIVIDUALS ARE ORGANIZING TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC ASSISTENCE TO THOSE SUFFERING ECONOMIC REPRISALS IN THE EFFORTS TO SECURE CIVIL RIGHTS. MR A PHILIP RANDOLPH IS CHAIRMAN AND LEADING CLERGYMAN OF PROTESTANT CATHOLIC AND JEWISH FAITHS ARE SPONSORS. ON WEDNESDAY FEB 29 A CONFERENCE TO LAUNCH THE ORGANIZATION IS TAKING PLACE. WE WOULD BE HONORED IF YOU COULD ATTEND AT OUR EXPENSE SO THAT WE MAY EXPRESS OUR DEEP RESPECT FOR YOU AND YOUR FELLOW WORKERS. PLEASE WIRE COLLECT ELLA J BAKER 452 ST NICHOLAS AVE NEW YORK CITY

ELLA J BAKER

PHWSr. MLKP-MBU: Box 14.

1. Ella Josephine Baker (1903–1986) was raised in Littleton, North Carolina. After graduating as valedictorian from Shaw University in 1927, Baker moved to Harlem, where, as national director of the Young Negroes Cooperative League, she helped organize African-American consumer cooperatives during the depression. She joined the staff of the NAACP as a field secretary in 1938 and served as national director of branches from 1943 to 1946. As NAACP branch president from 1954 to 1958, Baker advocated a decentralized leadership structure. She emphasized job training for African-American workers and led campaigns for school desegregation. Baker would later move to Atlanta at King's request to set up SCLC's headquarters.