

To Benjamin Elijah Mays

17 December 1956
[Montgomery, Ala.]

King agrees to speak at Morehouse on 17 January 1957 (an engagement he later canceled). He criticizes his own performance in a New York City symposium sponsored by the United Negro College Fund.¹ On 21 December Mays replied with encouraging words: "I am very glad I had an opportunity to hear you on the panel in New York. I think you handled your part of the program exceptionally well."

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, President
Morehouse College
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Dr. Mays:

Thanks for your very kind letter of November 14, inviting me to speak at Morehouse College. First, I must apologize for being so tardy in my reply. Absence from the city and the accumulation of a flood of mail account for the delay. Please know that it was not due to sheer negligence but to the inevitable pressures of an involved situation.

After checking my schedule, I find that January 17, is the best date for me. If this date is satisfactory, I will proceed to place it on my calendar.

I will be in Atlanta on the first of January to deliver the Emancipation Address.² I hope it will be possible to see you at that time.

¹ The symposium, entitled "The Negro Southerner Speaks," was held at Hunter College. Carl Rowan and two other newspaper reporters interviewed King, Atlanta University president Rufus Clement, and two other African-American southerners. Afterward Chester Bowles acclaimed King's leadership: "As Gandhi appealed to the basic decency, honesty, and democratic spirit of the British, so great new colored leaders will now appeal to the conscience and the decency of their white neighbors throughout the South" (see "Dr. King Speaks in New York City," *Dexter Echo*, 19 December 1956, p. 2).

² King delivered "Facing the Challenge of a New Age" at Atlanta's Big Bethel AME Church.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

It was a real pleasure seeing you in New York the other night. I only regret that I had to rush out so soon after the symposium to appear on a radio program.³ I felt that the panel went over fairly well but I was somewhat disappointed with my own participation. I had the feeling all along that I did not get to answer the vital questions confronting the Southern Negro. In fact, I felt that the whole panel fell to grapple with the basic questions. All and all, however, the experience was very rich. I was very happy to meet so many white persons of financial means who are so intensely interested in our struggle for freedom and justice. I owe you a deep debt of gratitude for the contact.

19 Dec
1956

With warm personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

M. L. King, Jr.,

Minister

MLK:mlb

TLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 62.

3. King and Rowan appeared on the NBC radio show "Tex and Jinx" from 10:35 P.M. to midnight (see Dorothy L. Barker to King, 7 December 1956).