

From Charles G. Gomillion

18 July 1957  
Tuskegee, Ala.

*During the month of June, the Tuskegee Civic Association (TCA) organized a “crusade for citizenship” to protest a bill which would gerrymander black neighborhoods out of the Tuskegee city limits.<sup>1</sup> On 25 June, TCA president Gomillion announced a selective buying campaign, and within the first few weeks local sales plunged by more than*

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1. Senate Bill 291, designed by state senator and White Citizens' Council leader Sam Engelhardt, would change the boundaries of Tuskegee from a square to a twenty-eight sided figure. Tuskegee mayor Phillip Lightfoot reportedly admitted that the reason for the gerrymander was “obvious. . . . They [African Americans] were getting too close to equality in voting numbers” (“Tuskegee Starts Own Boycott of Whites,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 29 June 1957). Shortly after the gerrymander became law, Engelhardt introduced a measure to dissolve Macon County's black majority by abolishing the county and dividing it among five surrounding counties (Rex Thomas, “Details Bared For Abolishing Macon County,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, 14 July 1957). The TCA continued its crusade until the gerrymandering law was unanimously overturned by the Supreme Court in 1960 (*Gomillion et al. v. Lightfoot et al.* [364 U.S. 339]).

*seventy-five percent.*<sup>2</sup> King spoke at a TCA mass meeting on 2 July, and the following week MIA executive secretary Mose Pleasure delivered a \$100 donation to the TCA.<sup>3</sup>

18 July  
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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
President, The Montgomery  
Improvement Association  
530-C South Union Street  
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Dr. King:

In behalf of The Tuskegee Civic Association and its many friends here in Macon County, I thank you for the inspiring message and generous contribution which you sent to us on last Tuesday evening by the Reverend Mose Pleasure. The message was enthusiastically received by the audience. The check for \$100 was deposited to the account of the Association and will be used in financing our efforts in the Crusade for Citizenship. Please extend to the members of The Montgomery Improvement Association our sincere gratitude for their generosity.<sup>4</sup>

Sincerely,

[*signed*]

C. G. Gomillion  
Dean of Students

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2. Avoiding the word "boycott" due to a statewide anti-boycott law, the TCA adopted a successful "Trade with Your Friends" program (see Stuart Culpepper III, "2,500 Tuskegee Negroes Urged to Boycott Stores," *Montgomery Advertiser*, 25 June 1957; John Wofford, "The Ballot Box and the Grocery List," *The Reporter* 17 [31 October 1957]: 23-26). Charles Goode Gomillion (1900-1995) earned a B.A. (1928) at Paine College and a Ph.D. (1959) at Ohio State University. In 1928 Gomillion joined the faculty of Tuskegee Institute and later became active in the Tuskegee Men's Club, an association which sought to improve the delivery of public services to Tuskegee's black community. Gomillion encouraged the Men's Club to include women members and change its name to the Tuskegee Civic Association in 1941. A long-time advocate of voting rights, Gomillion spurred the TCA to take a leading role in civic education and voter registration.

3. King told the crowd at Washington Chapel AME Zion Church that he "came to be inspired" by them: "You are not seeking to put the stores out of business but to put justice into business" (Culpepper, "2000 Ecstatic Negroes Greet King At Tuskegee," *Montgomery Advertiser*, 3 July 1957). Mose Pleasure, Jr. (1928-), born in Mobile, Alabama, graduated with a B.A. (1954) from Dillard University and an M.A. (1956) from Harvard University's School of Education. Pleasure left a job as alumni secretary for Dillard when King invited him to serve as executive secretary for the MIA. While in Montgomery he also served as King's pulpit associate at Dexter. Pleasure left Montgomery in 1958 to become pastor at First African Baptist Church in Brunswick, Georgia and later received an M.Div. (1963) from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.

4. King continued to support the TCA campaign; see note 2, Randolph to King, 7 August 1957, p. 245 in this volume; see also Gomillion to King, 29 March 1958.