

From Harris Wofford

16 October 1957  
Washington, D.C.

*With this letter Wofford, an attorney in the Washington, D.C., law firm of Covington & Burling, enclosed a twelve-page memorandum outlining his recommendations for the proposed Civil Rights Commission.<sup>1</sup> In the memorandum he recommended that the Commission serve as a forum for black and white southerners to work toward dissolving “the concentration of emotions” by proving that desegregation would “lift up the whole of the South.” Wofford’s memorandum also praised the work of the MIA and suggested that King be named to the Commission: “King’s exceptionally constructive approach*

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1. Wofford would later serve as an assistant to the Civil Rights Commission in 1958 and 1959.

*might qualify him despite his participation in the Montgomery boycott; he has not been involved in school litigation.”<sup>2</sup> King replied to Wofford on 28 October that “several of the points which you raise in this provocative statement are points that I plan to touch in the last chapter of my book.”*

16 Oct  
1957

Rev. Martin Luther King  
530 South Union  
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Martin:

How long does Little Rock replace India? I hope you will find the time to make the trip this winter.

Enclosed is a copy of a memorandum which I was asked to write for the use of some of the people considering the composition of the Commission on Civil Rights. It is, of course, confidential. If you have any time and any comments on it, I would, of course, value your criticism. Probably you are yourself in touch with those in and around the White House who are handling this.

I understand you are participating in the conference at the Howard School of Religion on November 6-.7. I am speaking there that afternoon of the 7th and will send you a copy of the talk I am drafting for it.<sup>3</sup> I would like very much to have a chance to talk with you sometime during your trip here then. I know that Chester Bowles, who is speaking elsewhere in Washington on the evening of November 6, is very anxious to talk with you. He suggested that we all get together, at your convenience. Could you suggest a time?

Regards to your wife.

Sincerely,

[*signed*]

Harris Wofford

{Thanks for seeing my brother. He has an article on Tuskegee coming out in The Reporter.}<sup>4</sup>

TALS. DABCC.

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2. Wofford, “Commission on Civil Rights,” 15 October 1957. On 21 October Wofford’s friend Stephen Benedict of the United States Information Agency sent a copy of the memorandum to Maxwell Rabb, noting that “[Herbert] Brownell or the Vice President might find it challenging.” Rabb thanked Benedict on 23 October, commenting that he had found Wofford’s work “exceedingly well done.”

3. At the Howard University annual convocation, “Non-violence and Social Change,” Wofford applauded the mass action strategy of the MIA and argued that leadership in social movements “must not be left to lawyers” (Wofford, “Non Violence and the Law,” 7 November 1957). King, who did not arrive in Washington until 9 November, delivered the closing sermon (King, “Love Your Enemies,” 10 November 1957; see also the 17 November 1957 version of this sermon, pp. 315–324 in this volume).

4. John G. Wofford, “The Ballot and the Grocery List,” *The Reporter* 17 (31 October 1957): 23–26.