

From Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.

20 June
1958

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Washington, D.C.

On 5 June King received a phone call from presidential aide Rocco Siciliano agreeing to his 29 May request for a conference between Eisenhower and civil rights leaders.¹ Four days later King met with Siciliano and other administration officials in Washington to establish the parameters of the meeting and to determine who would join him and A. Philip Randolph at the White House. The men agreed the conversation would be limited largely to a discussion of school integration and, despite the administration's trepidations, King insisted that Roy Wilkins be invited.² King agreed with the administration that Adam Clayton Powell's political and legal predicament precluded him from the meeting and "he made no effort to press for Powell's attendance."³ In the following telegram Powell offers King suggestions for the meeting, several of which were incorporated into the public statement read by Randolph to the president.

THE REVEREND MARTIN LUTHER KING=
309 JACKSON ST MONTGOMERY ALA =

IN REFERENCE TO YOUR FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON MONDAY, MAY I MAKE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS. I AM AWARE THAT MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE SUGGESTIONS ARE PROBABLY ON YOUR AGENDA BUT FOR FEAR THAT SOME OF THEM MAY NOT BE TAKEN UP, I AM TAKING THE LIBERTY TO GO OVER WHAT WE HERE IN CONGRESS CONSIDER AS THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS WHICH SHOULD BE DEALT WITH, ACCORDING TO OUR EXPERIENCE, BY THE WHITE HOUSE.

FIRST, THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE HAS BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF MANY LETTERS AND HAS HELD CONFERENCES WITH VARIOUS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS CONCERNING THE BOMBINGS OF JEWISH SYNAGOGUES AND NEGRO [*churches?*] IN THE SOUTH. ALSO, THE PROBLEM OF CONTINUAL BRUTALITY AND WANTON KILLING HAS BEEN

1. See Siciliano, Memo for the files, 9 June 1958.

2. The administration was still smarting from critical comments Wilkins made about the president's 12 May plea for patience to the "Summit Meeting of National Negro Leaders" in Washington, D.C. Urban League executive director Lester Granger was later added to the list, probably at the suggestion of the administration (see Siciliano to Sherman Adams, 10 June 1958, and Blanche Lavery, Memo for the files, 13 June 1958).

3. Siciliano to Adams, 10 June 1958. In a 28 January telegram to Eisenhower, Powell criticized the administration for its "seeming indifference" to civil rights. Powell cited Nixon's June 1957 commitment to King to hold a meeting of the President's Committee on Government Contracts in a southern city: "Today I spoke with Rev. Mr. King . . . and he said he had heard not a single word further from Vice President Nixon concerning his promise." King did attend the Committee's 15 January meeting in Washington. Before the White House could announce the 23 June meeting, Powell told reporters that the conference was "his idea" and that he had named the black leaders to attend. White House press secretary James C. Hagerty quickly denied that Powell was involved in the organization of the meeting ("President To See 4 Negro Leaders," *New York Times*, 20 June 1958).

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TAKEN UP WITH THEM. I AM REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO THE LATEST CASE IN DAWSON, GEORGIA.⁴ HERE IN NO UNMISTAKABLE TERMS THE PRESIDENT SHOULD SEE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION IMMEDIATELY SPEND MORE TIME AND VIGOR ON THESE GLARING UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES.

SECOND, ALTHOUGH THIS SESSION OF CONGRESS HAS BUT TWO MONTHS TO GO, THE PRESIDENT SHOULD CALL FOR IMMEDIATELY AND INSTRUCT THE REPUBLICAN LEADERS OF THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE TO PRESS FOR THE FOLLOWING

1. THE RESTORATION OF SECTION THREE TO THE PRESENT CIVIL RIGHTS LAW.⁵

2. THE MARSHALLING OF THEIR FORCES TO OPPOSE THE STATES RIGHTS BILL, H.R. 3 WHICH WAS VOTED OUT OF THE RULES COMMITTEE ON THURSDAY. THIS BILL IS DEFINITELY ANTI-CIVIL RIGHTS AND ANTI-LABOR.⁶ THE PRESIDENT SHOULD MAKE THIS PART OF A CONTINUING PROGRAM FOR NEXT YEAR IN VIEW OF THE SHORTNESS OF TIME LEFT FOR THIS SESSION OF CONGRESS.

3. WHILE INTEGRATION IS SUCCEEDING IN THE LOWER ECHELON OF THE ARMED FORCES, THERE IS DEFINITELY A ROAD BLOCK FROM THE GRADE OF MASTER SERGEANT ON. HERE, A PLAN SHOULD BE WORKED OUT BY THE WHITE HOUSE SO THAT NEGRO MEN AND WOMEN CAN BE ADVANCED IN ALL BRACKETS OF THE SERVICES RATHER THAN FROZEN BELOW THE RANK OF [document torn]

ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THE FACT THAT LESS THAN ONE PER-CENT OF THE TEACHING PERSONNEL IN THE ARMY DEPENDENTS SCHOOLS ARE NEGROES. THIS IS INEXCUSABLE AND THROUGH EXECUTIVE ORDER THIS CAN BE CHANGED.

4. THE PRESIDENT SHOULD DEMAND THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT RESPECT AND FOLLOW THROUGH HIS EXECUTIVE DESIRES AS STATED TO ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MR. MAXWELL RABB ON MAYXX ON MAY 6, 1955, THAT THERE SHOULD BE UTILIZATION OF NEGROES IN OVERSEAS EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT MOST OF THE POSTS IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE ARE ASSIGNED FROM CIVIL SERVICE LISTS, THERE ARE MANY POSTS TO WHICH NEGROES CAN BE APPOINTED AND APPOINTED IMMEDIATELY WHICH DO NOT COME UNDER CIVIL SERVICE SUCH AS CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ATTACHES. IN THIS SAME CATEGORY IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THE ARMY, MARINE, NAVAL AND AIR FORCE ATTACHES AND PERSONNEL OVERSEAS ARE ALMOST TOTALLY WHITE. THIS IS JUST AS TOTALLY INEXCUSABLE BECAUSE THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE ASSIGNED BY THE RESPECTIVE COMMANDERS UPON REQUEST FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

FINALLY, AN EXECUTIVE ORDER SHOULD BE ISSUED EITHER FROM THE WHITE HOUSE OR FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE DENYING

4. On 25 April James Brazier died as a result of a skull fracture received while he was in the custody of the Dawson police department. One month later Willie Countryman was shot and killed in his backyard by a policeman who, witnesses alleged, helped beat Brazier. These suspicious deaths and dozens of additional reports of police brutality prompted the FBI to investigate ("Despair Drove Dawson People to Talk to "Post" Reporter," *Atlanta Daily World*, 13 June 1958).

5. Section III, deleted from the Civil Rights Bill of 1957, allowed the Justice Department to initiate lawsuits to desegregate schools and public facilities.

6. H.R. 3 would have given precedence to state laws that conflicted with federal rulings. Trade unionists and civil rights advocates feared the bill, which was later defeated in the Senate, would undermine federal laws protecting the rights of workers and minorities.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

FEDERAL FUNDS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION WHERE STATES ARE IN DEFIANCE OF
FEDERAL LAW.

21 June
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I HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE INTEGRITY OF A OF YOU ATTENDING THE CON-
FERENCE AND I WISH YOU GOD SPEED WITH YOUR EFFORTS. THERE SHOULD BE A
PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AFTERWARDS. AND A FULL REPORT SHOULD BE MADE TO
THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ON WHAT TRANSPIRED. EVER SINCERELY=

ADAM CLAYTON POWELL JR MEMBER OF CONGRESS=

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