

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project  
To Lillian Eugenia Smith

11 August 1958  
Montgomery, Ala.

*King asks novelist and civil rights activist Smith to review Stride Toward Freedom. He sent similar letters to several other writers and editors, including Benjamin Mays and Arkansas Gazette editor Harry Ashmore.*<sup>1</sup>

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1. Mays, in his newspaper column, recommended that *Stride* be read by all Americans: "The book should be read because it is the first time in the life of this nation that nonviolence has been used on a large scale to achieve dignity and respect. . . . The Montgomery Story proves that resistance with love can work anywhere if the leadership is good and if the people are disciplined in love and good will" (Mays, "My View," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 October 1958). Ashmore wrote that he found the book "remarkably dispassionate . . . much of it a simple and straightforward narrative." He continued that King's reflections "provide a revealing self-portrait of this symbolic 'New Negro' which is of more than transient importance" (Ashmore, "Martin Luther King, Spokesman for the Southern Negro," *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 September 1958).

Miss Lillian Smith  
Old Screamer Mountain  
Clayton, Georgia

11 Aug  
1958

Dear Miss Smith:

In early September Harper and Brothers is publishing my book Stride Toward Freedom in which I have attempted to express the significance of the Montgomery struggle for both Negro and white Americans, especially its experiment in active nonviolence.

A number of serious workers in inter-group relations who have seen the manuscript feel that it is extremely important that the book be widely read for the contribution it can make in race relations.

Knowing your interest in solving the moral and social crisis that confronts us, amicably and nonviolently, I am taking the liberty of making this request of you. Would you suggest to the editor of the book review section of The Los Angeles Times that they give you the opportunity to review the book for them? If it is possible for you to fit this into your very busy schedule I will have the publishers to mail you an advanced copy.

A review by you would uniquely stimulate interest and discussion and thereby materially aid in focusing the attention of thinking Americans on one of the major social problems of our day.

With warmest thanks and cordial regards, I am

Very truly yours,  
[signed]  
Martin L. King, Jr.

MLK:mlb  
Enclosure

P.S. Enclosed is a list of some of the statements that have already been made concerning the book by prominent Americans.<sup>2</sup>

TLS. LSP-GU.

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2. Among the prominent Americans who offered pre-publication praise of *Stride* was James A. Pike, former Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, who predicted that *Stride* would become "a Christian Classic," combining "sound theology and ethics, realism about one of the most . . . pressing problems of our nation, and the autobiography of a great man—indeed one of the greatest men of our time" ("Appraisals of *Stride Toward Freedom*," August 1958). Also commenting positively on the book was Eleanor Roosevelt, who told a Harper & Brothers executive she found the book "most interesting," but added that "there is so much more to be done that one almost forgets that there has been any victory" (Roosevelt to Cass Canfield, 15 August 1958).



"May well become a Christian classic."  
—BISHOP JAMES A. PIKE

## Martin Luther King, Jr.

In addition to his presidency of the Montgomery Improvement Association, Martin Luther King, Jr. is chairman of the Southern Leadership Conference. Admired by people of all races over the world, he has received more than forty awards for his leadership of the Montgomery movement. He is a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, received a B.D. degree from Crozer Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from Boston University. He has served the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery as pastor for three years—his first pastorate.

Circular photos by Dan Weiner

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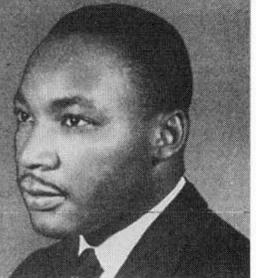
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PRINTED  
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*A leader of his people tells  
The Montgomery Story*

# STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM

By  
**MARTIN  
LUTHER  
KING,  
Jr.**



Advertisement for *Stride Toward Freedom* (August 1958)

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