

# Letter Exchange Between Martin Luther King Jr & Senator B. Russell

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Luther King Jr. played a crucial role in the American Civil Rights Movement, dedicating himself to racial equality and justice. As a key orator, he was a central figure in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization committed to nonviolent activism. His powerful speeches, notably the "I Have a Dream" address, resonated widely, pushing for a social movement. Within the SCLC, he led key initiatives like the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Selma to Montgomery marches.



Senator Richard B. Russell Jr. was an influential political figure from Georgia who served in the U.S. Senate for almost four decades. He was a notable proponent of states' rights and held conservative views, especially on issues related to racial segregation in the South. Senator Russell's perspectives sharply contrasted with those of the SCLC; Russell supported segregationist policies in the Southern states.

## Backgro

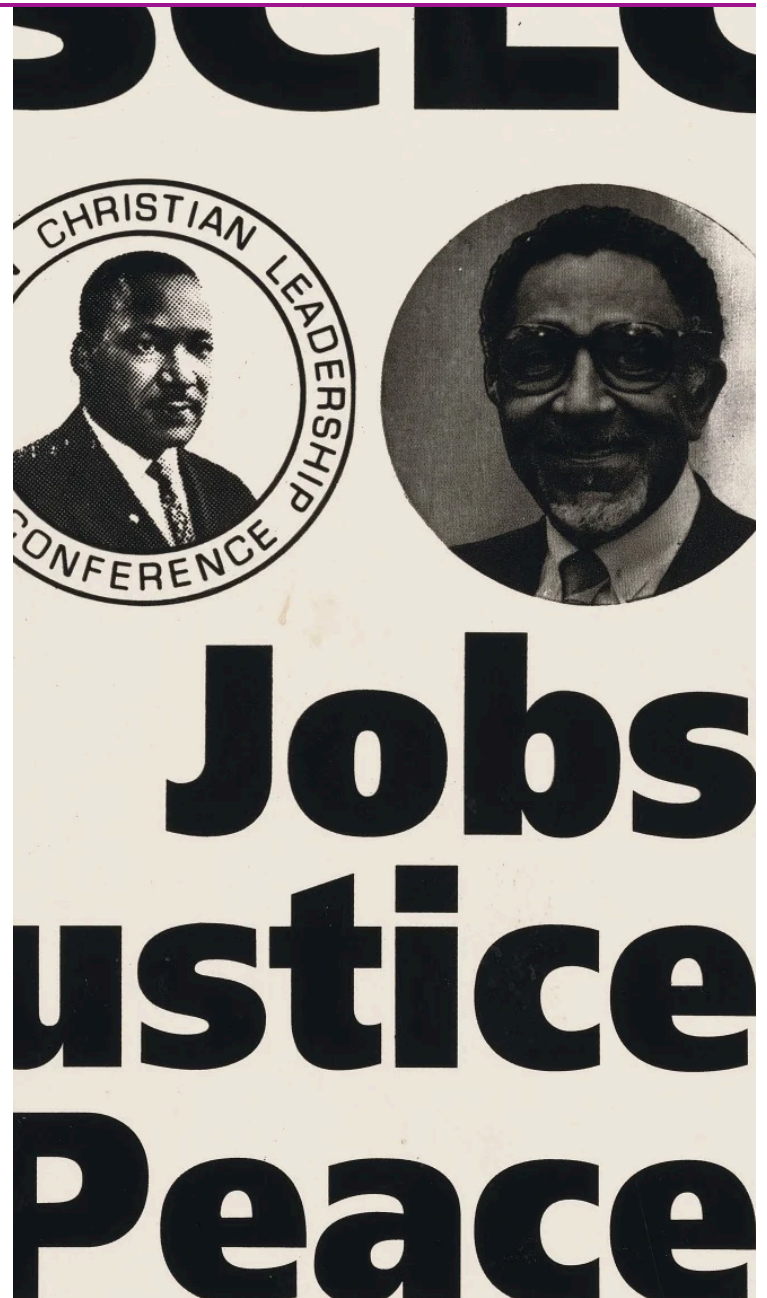
## Historical Context

On June 14th, 1966, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote a persuasive letter to Senator B. Russell with the primary goal of securing financial support for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is a civil rights organization founded with the intention of advancing the civil rights movement and equality for African Americans in the United States.

In the correspondence, King emphasizes the substantial scale of the ongoing movement in Mississippi and underscores the need for additional funding for the "March Against Fear" and also expand their peaceful resistance efforts.

Advocating for equality and the power of nonviolent protests, King highlights the importance of financial support to facilitate the organization's ongoing work.



In the letter, King writes "The march begun by Mr. James Meredith had to be finished".

In 1966, James Meredith participated in a "March Against Fear" to protest racism and to encourage African Americans in Mississippi to exercise their voting rights.

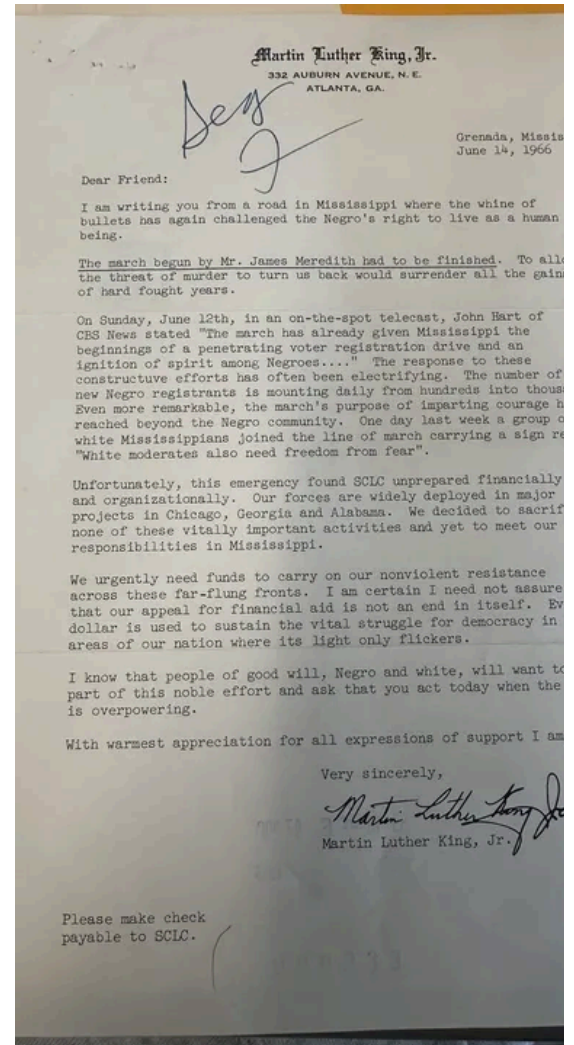
However, Meredith was shot a few days later, underscoring the dangers faced by those advocating for civil rights.

The shooting prompted civil rights leaders, like Martin Luther King and organizations like the SCLC to show their support.

Despite the violence, the march continued with an larger group of participants, drawing more attention to the march and causing a need for more funding.



James Meredith



## Rhetorical Strategies

1. **Historical & Biblical References:** By drawing on their shared religious beliefs, King hopes to find some common ground and strengthen his argument. He also chooses to frame his argument as for both "Negro and white".

2. **Tone:** King maintains a professional, calm tone in which he is able to communicate his viewpoint. He starts the letter with "Dear Friend" demonstrating his peaceful intent in the letter. Additionally, he ends the letter

I know that people of good will, Negro and white, will want to be part of this noble effort and ask that you act today when the need is overpowering.

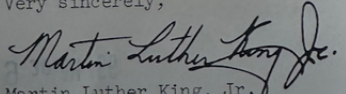
Dear Friend:

expressions". Despite Russell's dislike for pro-civil rights rhetoric and action, King still writes to him with the same peaceful approach.

3. Ethical & Emotional Appeal: King makes sure to establish credibility when asking for funds. He also creates a sense of urgency, describing the current obstacles faced by African Americans.

With warmest appreciation for all expressions of support I am,

Very sincerely,

  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

We urgently need funds to carry on our nonviolent resistance across these far-flung fronts. I am certain I need not assure you that our appeal for financial aid is not an end in itself. Every dollar is used to sustain the vital struggle for democracy in the areas of our nation where its light only flickers.

#### SOME IMPORTANT FISCAL FACTS ABOUT SCLC

- No officer of SCLC, including Dr. King, receives any salary or compensation for his services.
- SCLC is registered with the Charities Registration Dept. of New York State—Reg. #12147.
- Our administrative costs are well below the ratio regarded as standard by agencies.
- Our books are audited by Jesse B. Blayton, C.P.A. Our financial statement is published annually and is available to the public.
- Our fund raising is done in the most careful, economical fashion by our own staff and volunteers. We use no commercial fund raisers to insure that the largest possible portion of your contribution supports active programs.
- Each contributor is kept informed of our activities by means of our newsletter and other material.

#### YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO SCLC SUPPORTS:

- Voter Registration (Southwide)
- Citizenship Clinics and Work-shops on non-violence
- Direct Action Projects to end segregation
- Merit Employment Programs to end job discrimination
- Special Educational Scholarships
- Legal Defense and bail for victims of racial injustice
- Citizenship and literacy schools

#### SCLC IS DEDICATED TO

helping the American Negro attain first class citizenship by NON-VIOLENT direct action and education.

*"No American can afford to be apathetic about the problem of racial injustice."  
—Martin Luther King, Jr.*

In his letter to the senator, Martin Luther King Jr. attached a handout containing the SCLC's primary objectives in civil rights activism & other key information regarding the organization's validity.



# Outcome

Following Meredith's "March Against  
, several African Americans  
to exercise their right to  
Registration numbers saw a  
increase due to his efforts in  
ating for civil rights.

ed importance of solidarity in  
vil rights movement &  
raged more to participate in  
ating for their deserved  
s.

