

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

C-57

TO : Mr. Mohr

DATE: December 2, 1964

FROM : C. D. DeLoach

UNCLASSIFIED

SUBJECT: MARTIN LUTHER KING
APPOINTMENT WITH DIRECTOR
3:35 P.M., 12-1-64

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 12/9/80 BY [signature]

Tolson _____
DeLoach _____
Casper _____
Callahan _____
Conrad _____
Evans _____
Gale _____
Rosen _____
Sullivan _____
Tavel _____
Trotter _____
Tele. Room _____
Holmes _____
Gandy _____

At Reverend King's request, the Director met with King; Reverend Ralph Abernathy, Secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); Dr. Andrew Young, Executive Assistant to King; and Walter Fauntroy, SCLC representative here in Washington, at 3:35 p.m., 12-1-64, in the Director's Office.

I met King and his associates in the hallway outside the Director's Office. An attempt was made to rush them directly through the reception room, however, King slowly posed for the cameras and newsmen before proceeding.

Upon being introduced to the Director, Reverend King indicated his appreciation for Mr. Hoover's seeing him then stated that Reverend Abernathy would speak first. Reverend Abernathy told the Director it was a great privilege to meet the distinguished Director of the FBI--a man who had done so much for his country. Reverend Abernathy expressed the appreciation of the Negro race for the Director's fine work in the field of civil rights. He stated that the Negroes had problems, particularly in the South, and, therefore, had requested a discussion with the Director at the very time their people were continuing to "rise up from their bondage."

Reverend King spoke up. He stated it was vitally necessary to keep a working relationship with the FBI. He wanted to clear up any misunderstanding which might have occurred. He stated that some Negroes had told him that the FBI had been ineffective, however, he was inclined to discount such criticism. Reverend King asked that the Director please understand that any criticism of the Director and the FBI which had been attributed to King was either a misquote or an outright misrepresentation. He stated this particularly concerned Albany, Georgia. He stated that the only time he had ever criticized the FBI was because of instances in which Special Agents who had been given complaints in civil rights cases regarding brutality by police officers were seen the following day being friendly with those same police officers. King stated this, of course, promoted distrust inasmuch as the police sometimes "brutalized" Negroes.

Enclosure - Sent 12/2/64

- 1 - Mr. Belmont
- 1 - Mr. Rosen
- 1 - Mr. Sullivan
- 1 - Miss Gandy
- 1 - Miss Holmes
- 1 - Mr. Jones

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1 - Mr. [unclear] in response to [unclear] CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

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Reverend King stated he personally appreciated the great work of the FBI which had been done in so many instances. He stated this was particularly true in Mississippi. He added that FBI developments in that State have been very significant. The FBI is a great restraining influence. Reverend King denied that he had ever stated that Negroes should not report information to the FBI. He said he had actually encouraged such reporting in many instances. He claimed there were good relationships in many communities, especially Atlanta, Georgia, between Negroes and the FBI. He stated he would continue to strongly urge all of his people to work closely with the FBI.

Reverend King stated he has never made any personal attack upon Mr. Hoover. He stated he had merely tried to articulate the feelings of the Negroes in the South in order to keep a tradition of nonviolence rather than violence. He added that the Negro should never be transferred from a policy of nonviolence to one of violence and terror.

Reverend King said that the Director's report to the President this summer on rioting was a very excellent analysis.

Reverend King advised that Negroes are currently laboring under a very frustrating situation. He stated that, "We sometimes are on the verge of temporary despair." He added that it was a challenge and a duty for him to keep the Negro from coming to a boiling point. He stated that sometimes the cries coming from the Negro represent a real feeling of lonesomeness and despair. He, however, has pointed out that the path to success is nonviolence rather than violence.

Reverend King stated he has been, and still is, very concerned regarding the matter of communism in the civil rights movement. He stated he knew that the Director was very concerned because he bore the responsibility of security in the Nation. Reverend King stated that from a strong philosophical point of view he could never become a communist inasmuch as he recognizes this to be a crippling totalitarian disease. He stated that as a Christian he could never accept communism. He claimed that when he learns of the identity of a communist in his midst he immediately deals with the problem by removing this man. He stated there have been one or two communists who were engaged in fund raising for the SCLC. Reverend King then corrected himself to say that these one or two men were former communists and not Party members at the present time. He then identified "Jack O'Dell" as an example. He stated that he had insisted that O'Dell leave his staff because the success of his organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was far more important than friendship with O'Dell.

The Director interrupted King to state that the FBI had learned from long experience that the communists move in when trouble starts. The Director explained that communists thrive on chaos. The Director mentioned that his riot report to the President reflected the opportunistic efforts of communists. He then stated that communists have no interest in the future of the Negro race and that King, of all people, should be aware of this fact. The Director spoke briefly of communist attempts to infiltrate the labor movement.

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The Director told King and his associates that the FBI shares the same despair which the Negroes suffer when Negro leaders refused to accept the deep responsibility they have in the civil rights movement. He stated that when Negroes are encouraged not to cooperate with the FBI this sometimes frustrates or delays successful solution of investigations. The Director told King that he had personally gone to Mississippi to meet with Governor Paul Johnson inasmuch as there had been practically no liaison between the Department of Justice, the President and the State of Mississippi beforehand. The Director stated that upon meeting Governor Johnson the Governor explained honestly that he was a segregationist, however, abhorred violence. The Director stated that he had told Governor Johnson they had a common meeting ground inasmuch as he was in Mississippi to put an end to violence and brutality. The Director told Governor Johnson that he would like to do this in collaboration with the State Police, however, if the FBI could not receive such cooperation we would do it on our own. The Director then made reference to watermoccasins, rattlesnakes and redneck sheriffs, in that order, who still exist in Mississippi who represent the trashy type of characters who are promoting civil rights violations. The Director told King that we had trained twenty representatives of the Mississippi State Highway Patrol and that this had represented a good move to promote better cooperation and solution of civil rights cases.

3. The Director told Reverend King that the FBI had put the "fear of God" in the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). He told King that we knew of the identity of the murderers of the three civil rights workers and that these murderers would soon be brought to trial. The Director then spoke of the terror in Mississippi backwoods and of the fact that sheriffs and deputy sheriffs participate in crimes of violence. He summarized by telling King that we, therefore, are under the same strain that sincere Negro leaders are under. The Director added that the KKK constantly damns the FBI and that we have currently been classified as the "Federal Bureau of Integration" in Mississippi.

The Director told King that many cases, which have been brought about as a result of FBI investigation, must be tried in State Court. He spoke of the difficulty in obtaining a verdict of guilty in instances in which white juries are impaneled in cases involving white men. The Director spoke of the KKK involvement in the Lemuel Penn case just outside of Athens, Georgia. He stated this was an outrageous miscarriage of justice in that the defendants, despite the open and shut evidence on the part of the FBI, had been acquitted.

The Director made it clear to Reverend King and his associates that the FBI could not state whether a conviction would be obtained or not in the case involving the murdered three civil rights victims. He stated, however, that the FBI has excellent evidence in this case. The Director then explained that it was most necessary for the FBI not to "jump the gun" unless we had sufficient evidence in which a case could be brought to trial.

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The Director made reference to Reverend King's allegation that the FBI deals or associates with law enforcement officers who have been involved in civil rights violations. He stated emphatically that, "I'll be damned if the FBI has associated with any of these people nor will we be associated with them in the future." The Director explained that the FBI, not only because of the very nature of the law but also because of the background of our investigative employees, was in full sympathy with the sincere aspects of the civil rights movement. He stated that the FBI constantly needs cooperation and assistance in order to solve cases. He added that he made it a point, several years ago, to transfer northern Special Agents to southern offices. He stated that, for the most part, northern-born Agents are assigned civil rights cases in the South. The Director added that he feels that our Special Agents, regardless of where they are born, will investigate a case impartially and thoroughly. He mentioned, however, that it was unfair to the Agent and the FBI to "have a strike against him" in that criticism had been leveled over the fact that southern Agents would not give Negroes a "fair shake." The Director stated that such criticism was entirely unjustifiable and that no case had ever been brought to our attention proving such a fact.

The Director made reference to the recent case in McComb, Mississippi, in which nine men had been charged with burning churches and violence against Negroes. He stated this again was a miscarriage of justice. He added that the judge's decision in releasing the defendants because they had learned their lesson and were merely youths was entirely wrong and that it caused some people to question where youth really began. He explained that some of the defendants had been in their 40's. The Director added that a deal probably, of course, had been made, however, this would certainly not represent any deterrent to future actions of violence by these men.

The Director explained that there is a great misunderstanding today among the general public and particularly the Negro race as to what the FBI can and cannot do in the way of investigations. The Director emphasized that the FBI cannot recommend prosecution or declination of prosecution. He stated that Agents cannot make "on the spot" arrests. He stated that the FBI merely investigates and then the Department of Justice determines whether prosecution be entertained or not. The Director added that the question is sometimes raised why prosecution is not scheduled sooner. He stated this, of course, was not the responsibility of the FBI in any way whatsoever. He pointed out that our civil rights investigations are conducted in a very thorough and expeditious manner once the Department has authorized such investigations.

The Director spoke of the FBI's successful penetration of the KKK. He stated that the FBI has interviewed all members of the KKK in Mississippi and has served notice to these members that if trouble occurs we plan to come to them first. He stated our penetration of the KKK has been as successful as the manner in which we infiltrated the communists and the Soviet espionage services. He stated that our progress in infiltrating the KKK has been so rapid that Klan members now suspect each other and are fighting among themselves. The Director mentioned that we have two confessions in the killing of the three civil rights workers. He added that the Klan in Mississippi has failed to meet for some time because the members of this organization are apprehensive.

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as to the identity of FBI informants in their midst. The Director stated he had personally been an enemy of the KKK for a long time.

He spoke of the FBI's case in Louisiana in the late 1920's in which FBI evidence successfully culminated in the conviction of the top Klan leader. He stated the KKK fully concentrated on Negroes, Jews and Catholics, however, concentration now is strictly on the Negro race.

The Director told the group that in the Lemuel Penn case the defendants have recently been indicted and are to stand trial in Federal Court. He stated the trial would begin sometime next week. He mentioned that the same defendants were responsible for beating Negroes and participation in other acts of violence. The Director added that the FBI's success in infiltrating the KKK has been so extensive that we now sometimes know in advance what the KKK plans to do and take preventive measures accordingly.

The Director explained that in Alabama the FBI cannot deal with the Highway Patrol because of the psychoneurotic tendencies of the Alabama Governor. He stated that the State of Georgia has a good Governor and that the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, while not comparable to the Mississippi Highway Patrol, has cooperated with the FBI.

The Director told Reverend King and his associates that FBI representatives have held several thousand law enforcement conferences in which southern police officers have been educated as to civil rights legislation. He stated this has clearly assisted law enforcement, particularly the FBI, however, admittedly, this represents slow progress, but progress nevertheless. He added that this educational campaign will be continued and that it will eventually take hold. The Director gave the example of a Mississippi Sheriff who recently broke a case as a result of FBI training.

The Director made it very clear to Reverend King and his associates that FBI Agents conduct very thorough interviews in civil rights cases. He stated he would like to know immediately if any of our Special Agents ever act in a supercilious manner or if they mishandle a complaint regarding civil rights. He stated that if the facts reflect that our Agent is in the wrong he will be called on the carpet fast. The Director asked that Reverend King or any of his representatives feel free to call the FBI at any time they have such complaints.

The Director told Reverend King he desired to give him some advice. He stated that one of the greatest things the Negro leaders could accomplish would be to encourage voting registration among their people. Another thing would be to educate the people in the skills so that they could compete in the open market. The Director mentioned several professions in which Negroes could easily learn skills. The Director also told King he wanted him to know that registrars in the South were now more careful in their actions. He stated that there were less attempts now to prevent Negroes from

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registering inasmuch as the FBI is watching such actions very carefully. The Director told Reverend King that the FBI was making progress in violations regarding discrimination in eating places. He gave as a specific example a restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia, in which surveillances have taken place to ascertain if out-of-state cars are being served at this particular restaurant. The Director stated he personally was in favor of equality in eating places and in schools. He stated emphatically, however, he was not in favor of taking Negro children 10 or 12 miles across town simply because their parents wanted them to go to a school other than those in their specific neighborhood.

The Director told Reverend King that in due time there will be a complete change in the mores of community thinking in the United States regarding the racial problem. He stated that meanwhile the FBI will continue to handle its responsibilities in a thorough and impartial manner. He reiterated that the FBI cannot encourage prosecution in Federal Court despite the fact that some local courts cannot be trusted. He added that some judges cannot be trusted.

The Director praised the Georgia papers that declared the verdict of the Penn case to be a travesty of justice. He added that the Jackson, Mississippi, paper had contained several editorials deploring violence against Negroes and participation in church burnings. The same editorials declared there was no way to solve racial problems. The Director stated that his statements made at a press conference in Jackson, Mississippi, this summer to the effect that he was in Mississippi to see to it that an end was put to the violence of bombings and burning churches had had some effect upon backwoods terrorists.

The Director told King that he wanted to make it very clear that the question is often raised as to whether the FBI will protect civil rights workers or Negroes. He stated that he has in the past and will continue to answer such questions on the basis that the FBI does not have the authority nor the jurisdiction to protect anyone. He stated that when the Department of Justice desires that Negroes be protected this is the responsibility of U. S. Marshals. The Director reiterated that the FBI is strictly an investigative agency and cannot and will not extend itself beyond legislated jurisdiction. The Director repeated very emphatically that while our investigations are very definitely thorough and impartial he wanted to state once again that if Reverend King or any of his associates ever knew of a Special Agent showing bias or prejudice he wanted to know about this matter immediately.

The Director explained that we have civil rights cases not only in the South but also in the northern cities. He gave examples of New York and Chicago. He stated that there have been some cases in Miami, Florida.

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The Director spoke once again of the necessity of the Negro educating himself in order to compete in manual and professional skills. He mentioned the example of a shoeshine boy in Miami, Florida, who turned out to be, after questioning by the Director, a graduate of Howard University. This shoeshine boy, a Negro, explained to the Director that he could not get a job above the level of shoeshine boy because of the color of his skin. The Director stated this, of course, was wrong and that under no circumstances did he, or anyone in the FBI, share the opinion that the Negro, or any other race, should be kept down. The Director spoke of his pride in Negro Agents and particularly mentioned Special Agent Aubrey Lewis, the former Notre Dame track star who is currently assigned to the New York Division.

The Director spoke of a Miami Special Agent who was transferred to that office from St. Louis. This Agent explained to the Director on one occasion that he was first a little upset about being transferred to Miami because he felt that his race would be against him. He stated, however, much to his surprise, that the white people in Miami treated him with the greatest of courtesy while people of his own race referred to him as a "fink" simply because he was a representative of law enforcement.

Reverend King interrupted the Director at this point and asked if this same Negro Agent is still assigned to the Miami Division. The Director replied in the negative. The Director stated that at a recent dinner Father Hesburgh, the President of Notre Dame University, explained to the Director that his institution had difficulty getting Negroes on the football team because their grades were never high enough. The Director told Reverend King the same thing is true of Negroes who apply for the position of Special Agent. He stated in most instances they lack the qualifications, however, we are very happy to hire any Negro who was qualified for the position. The Director told Reverend King that we, of course, could not let down our qualifications simply because of the color of a person's skin.

The Director told Reverend King and his associates that the problems that exist between the Negro leaders and the FBI is a mutual problem. He stated in most instances in civil rights matters we have learned that "you are damned if you do and you are damned if you don't." The Director stated nevertheless the FBI would continue to do its job. He stated that we additionally are very proud of 10 or 11 Indian Special Agents and of a number of Special Agents who have Mexican blood in them. He stated that the color of a man's skin makes no difference to the FBI whatsoever, however, we do merit the cooperation and assistance of all groups and it is most unfair when these groups are taught not to cooperate with the FBI.

The Director mentioned that he wanted to make it very plain that the FBI will not tolerate any of our personnel being slapped around. He gave an example of the Lombardozzi case in New York where one of our Agents was jumped by five hoodlums in a church. He stated these hoodlums were immediately taught a lesson. The Director mentioned that in the war with hoodlums, for every man we lose we make certain, through legal means of course, that the hoodlums lose the same number or more

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The Director proudly spoke of the ability of Agents to outshoot and outfight hoodlums and other individuals who attempted to take advantage of our personnel. He stated the KKK is afraid to "mix" with our Agents. He mentioned that the Klan was "yellow." He stated they are brave as long as they have the majority with them but afraid when they face an equal number.

The Director spoke of the Mack Charles Parker case in Poplarville, Mississippi. He stated that our evidence in this case had been turned over to Governor Coleman, the then Governor of that State. He mentioned that Governor Coleman was a decent type of individual who had immediately seen to it that a State Court received the evidence contributed by the FBI. The Director mentioned that our evidence in this case was excellent, however, the Grand Jury refused to indict the subjects involved in the lynching of Parker.

The Director told Reverend King that in many instances our Agents have been spit upon, they have been refused food and lodging and many things are done to thwart hard-hitting investigations by the FBI. He stated that nevertheless we continue to gather evidence in an expeditious and thorough manner.

Reverend Abernathy stated that the Negroes have a real problem in coming down the current system of segregated voting tests in the South. He stated it was most important that there be kept alive in the Negro communities a ray of hope. He stated that the Negro people should not be allowed to fall into an atmosphere of despair.

The Director explained that this was a very important point. He stated that real progress has been made in higher wages, voting registration and housing matters. The Director pointed out, however, that such progress has not been emphasized by the rabblers who constantly attempt to stir up the Negroes against the whites. The Director gave as an example the communist, Epton, in New York City. The Director stated that Epton is sometimes pointed to as a person the Negro should emulate because of his militancy. The Director stated this was wrong and it is also wrong to "mislead" Negroes.

Reverend Abernathy stated that the SCLC does not want Negroes like Epton in their movement. He stated that Reverend King, more than anyone else, has prevented people like Epton and the Muslims from taking over the civil rights movement. Reverend Abernathy stated that actually the Negroes are a part of the Federal Government, therefore, anything that represents the Federal Government is an encouragement to the Negro. He added that even the side of a post office building or a Federal courtroom is an encouragement to the Negro. He mentioned that when a Negro receives information that a case in which he has been brutally mistreated is going to Federal Court he feels encouraged over the fact that he will get a fair trial. Reverend Abernathy continued that the same problem is true when a Negro sees an FBI Agent. He stated that the Negro feels open encouragement inasmuch as the FBI will not only fairly handle his case but will serve as a great deterrent to violence.

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The Director stated that the KKK today is represented by common white trash. He stated that the Klan was actually worse than the Communist Party inasmuch as the Klan resorts to violence while the communists usually emulate termites in their activities.

The Director reiterated that King and his associates should feel free to call him at any time when they have knowledge of possible civil rights violations. King replied that over the past few years he has noted amazing signs of progress in the civil rights field. He stated he has been very surprised to see some communities comply with the new civil rights statutes. He stated there still are some pockets of resistance particularly in the South. He added that the SCLC is planning to stimulate voting registration activities in Selma, Alabama, in the near future. He mentioned that some members of his organization have been successful in infiltrating this white community and have learned there is a great potential for violence in Selma.

The Director interrupted King and briefly detailed five cases in which the FBI has gathered evidence in Selma, Alabama. The Director identified these cases fully, and specifically the case against Sheriff James Clark. The Director mentioned that these cases came about as a result of FBI investigation and that we were continuing our investigations in Selma, Alabama. He mentioned that one case would come to trial on December 9, 1964. The Director particularly made reference to the fact that we have three excellent cases in Selma at the present time.

Reverend King inquired as to whether his representatives should notify the FBI when they arrive in Selma, Alabama. He quickly corrected himself that he knew his representatives should contact the FBI upon arrival, however, he asked the Director what would be the possibilities of FBI Agents being in Selma, Alabama, inasmuch as there appeared to be a potential for violence. The Director specifically asked Reverend King when his activities would take place. Reverend Abernathy indicated such activity would take place around January 1, 1965. The Director clearly explained that FBI Agents would be in Selma, not for the purpose of "protecting" anyone, but for the purpose of observing and reporting to the Department of Justice any possible violations of civil rights that might occur. Reverend King expressed appreciation in this regard.

Reverend King stood up and stated he wished to express his personal thanks for a most fruitful and necessary meeting. The Director told Reverend King that he should get in touch with us at anytime he felt it was necessary.

Reverend King mentioned that there were representatives of the press in the Director's reception room. He turned to me and asked if the FBI planned to make any comment regarding the meeting. I told him that the Director had instructed that we make no comment whatsoever. Reverend King asked the Director if there would be any objections if he read a short prepared statement to the press. The Director told Reverend King this, of course, was up to him.

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In proceeding to the reception room, Reverend King pulled out a press release, hand-written in ink, out of his right coat pocket. This press release obviously had been prepared prior to the time Reverend King arrived at FBI Headquarters. A previous memorandum has been sent through reporting verbatim the comments by King in the Director's reception room.

ACTION:

It is suggested that the attached letter be sent to the President concerning the meeting between the Director, Reverend King and his associates.

G.K.
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The General Investigative Division, Civil Rights Section, should take due note of the proposed activities in Selma, Alabama, and should instruct the appropriate office to make certain that Agents are on hand to observe activities in Selma, Alabama, on or around January 1, 1965.

12-10-64
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Memorandum of C. D. DeLoach, Crime Records Division

ADDENDUM:CDD:dms. 12/10/64

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I fully agree that this work should eventually be done, particularly if an additional controversy arises with King. I see no necessity, however, in this work being done at the present time inasmuch as the controversy has quieted down considerably and we are not in need of transcriptions right now. In view of the transcription already accomplished, and because of the above-mentioned reasons, I would recommend that we hold off doing this tremendous amount of work until there is an actual need.

I think it should be done now while it is fresh in the minds of the specially trained agents.

→ Done. We have prepared 321 pp of transcripts (231 pp for item #1-WFO + 90 pp for item #6-LA) 1/27/65

DEC 10 1964