

May 13, 1958

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

I was sitting in the audience at the Summit Meeting of Negro [African-American] Leaders yesterday when you said we must have patience. On hearing you say this, I felt like standing up and saying, "Oh no! Not again." ...

17 million Negroes cannot do as you suggest and wait for the hearts of men to change. We want to enjoy now the rights that we feel we are entitled to as Americans. This we cannot do unless we pursue aggressively goals which all other Americans achieved over 150 years ago.

As the chief executive of our nation, I respectfully suggest that you unwittingly crush the spirit of freedom in Negroes by constantly urging forbearance [delay] and give hope to those pro-segregation leaders like Governor [Faulkner] Faulkner who would take from us even those freedoms we now enjoy. Your own experience with Governor Faubus is proof enough that forbearance and not eventual integration is the goal the pro-segregation leaders seek....

Respectfully yours,

Jackie Robinson

Source: National Archives & Records Administration

1. Which action by the federal government would Jackie Robinson most likely have supported to achieve his stated goals?

- (1) federal assistance to expand segregated facilities
- (2) creation of additional job training programs
- (3) appointment of a commission to study the causes of urban race riots
- (4) faster implementation of the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954)

2. When Jackie Robinson mentions President Dwight D. Eisenhower's experience with Governor Faubus, he is referring to the action the president took in

- (1) hiring minority workers to build the interstate highway system
- (2) sending federal troops to Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas
- (3) supporting the Montgomery bus boycott
- (4) ordering that all military bases located in southern states be integrated

3. Why do you think Jackie Robinson decided to write the President on this issue?

4. Write a response that you think President Eisenhower would have sent back to Jackie Robinson.

... But far beyond this, we call upon them [African Americans] to accept Christian Love in full knowledge of its power to defy evil. We call upon them to understand that non-violence is not a symbol of weakness or cowardice, but as Jesus demonstrated, non-violent resistance transforms [changes] weakness into strength and breeds courage in face of danger. We urge them, no matter how great the provocation [aggravation] to dedicate themselves to this motto:

"Not one hair of one head of one white person shall be harmed."

We advocate [support] non-violence in words, thought and deed, we believe this spirit and this spirit alone can overcome the decades of mutual fear and suspicion that have infested and poisoned our Southern culture. . . .

Source: Southern Negro Leaders Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration, "A Statement to the South and Nation," January 11, 1957, Atlanta, Ga.

1. When was this statement made? By who?

2. According to this document what method was recommended to help African Americans achieve equality?

3. What "motto" is the SCLC asking African-Americans to follow?

-Why might this be difficult?

4. Do you think this method will work? Explain