With the Montgomery bus boycott at an end, King confronts the sudden demands of celebrity while trying to identify the next steps in the burgeoning struggle for equality. Anxious to duplicate the success of the boycott, he spends much of 1957 and 1958 establishing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. But advancing the movement in the face of dogged resistance proves disheartening for the young minister, and he finds that it is easier to inspire supporters with his potent oratory than to organize a mass movement for social change. Yet King remains committed: "The vast possibilities of a nonviolent, non-cooperative approach to the solution of the race problem are still challenging indeed. I would like to remain a part of the unfolding development of this approach for a few more years."

King’s budding international prestige is affirmed in March 1957 when he attends the independence ceremonies in Ghana, West Africa. Two months later his first national address, at the "Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom," is widely praised, and in June 1958, King’s increasing prominence is recognized with a long-overdue White House meeting. During this period King also cultivates alliances with the labor and pacifist movements, and international anticolonial organizations. As Volume IV closes, King is enjoying the acclaim that greeted his first book, Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story, only to suffer a near-fatal stabbing in New York City.
To Lillian Eugenia Smith
King, Martin Luther, Jr.
August 11, 1958

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