

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ebenezer Baptist Church

407 Auburn Avenue, N. E.

Atlanta, Georgia

██████████
Jackson 2-4395

March 28, 1961

Mr. Sammy Davis, Jr.
THE SANDS
Las Vegas, Nevada

Dear Sammy:

The endless problems generated by our great FREEDOM MOVEMENT can only be compared to a river that never stops flowing. Fortunately, its progress too is like a river. Slowly--but surely and relentlessly--the Movement keeps pressing insistently forward, step by step. One such step, in my opinion, was the historic affair at Carnegie Hall on February 27, which you personally initiated and organized, then crowned with your astonishing artistry.

Not very long ago, it was customary for Negro artists to hold themselves aloof from the struggle for equality, in the belief that the example of their personal success was in itself a contribution in that it helped to disprove the myth of Negro inferiority--which indeed it did.

Today, however, our great Negro artists feel that this is an essentially defensive position which does not meet the needs of our time when the Negro people as a whole are vigorously striding towards freedom. Today greats like Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, Mahalia Jackson and yourself, of course, are not content to merely identify with the struggle. They actively participate in it, as artists and as citizens, adding the weight of their enormous prestige and thus helping to move the struggle forward.

Who can measure the impact, the inspirational effect, upon the millions of Negroes who have learned through thousands of grapevines that one of their idols, Sammy Davis, Jr., was responsible for rallying some of the greatest stars of Hollywood to come

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forward and publicly support the great cause of Negro freedom? On campuses and in communities throughout the south they are still talking about it and will continue to, I assure you, for many a long month to come.

It is primarily in behalf of these people--the embattled students and the many other thousands of southern freedom fighters, including my colleagues, the four ministers now being legally persecuted by the State of Alabama, that I wish to thank you deeply and sincerely for the truly significant contribution you have made, and, I am certain, will continue to make in the future.

I hope our schedules will dovetail sometime soon so that we can spend a little time together under more relaxed conditions.

With warm personal regards to you and your charming wife, I am

Sincerely yours,



Martin Luther King, Jr.

Km

P.S. I'm sorry I had to leave
Miami before it planned and therefore didn't
get to write the letter to Frank Sinatra
If you will send me his address I
will write him immediately.