

# From James P. Coleman

**AUTHOR:**

COLEMAN, J. P. (JAMES PLEMON) 1914-1991 (MISSISSIPPI. OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR)

**DATE:**

APRIL 23, 1956

**HOW DO WE DETERMINE CONJECTURED INFORMATION? ?****LOCATION:**

JACKSON, MISS.

**GENRE:**

LETTER

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## Details

*After newspapers announced that King would be a featured speaker, along with Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., at the fifth annual meeting of the Mississippi Regional Council of Negro Leadership in Jackson on 27 April, Mississippi governor James P. Coleman announced that "it would be a tragedy to have professional agitators like Powell and King come to our state and fan the fires anew."<sup>1</sup> The meeting was expected to draw an audience of thousands, which prompted Coleman to urge King (and Powell) to "reconsider and indefinitely postpone your visit."*

REVEREND MARTIN LUTHER KING  
MONTGOMERY ALA

THE PRESS REPORTS THAT YOU ARE SCHEDULED TO ADDRESS A PUBLIC MEETING IN JACKSON MISSISSIPPI ON FRIDAY OF THIS WEEK STOP MISSISSIPPI HAS NO INTENTION NOW OR HEREAFTER OF INTERFERING WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OF FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH YET I FEEL IT MY DUTY AS GOVERNOR OF MISSISSIPPI TO INFORM YOU THAT CONDITIONS IN OUR STATE ARE NOW MORE TRANQUIL THAN AT ANY TIME IN RECENT MONTHS AND IN VIEW OF YOUR RECORD YOUR APPEARANCE HERE WILL BE A GREAT DISSERVICE TO OUR NEGRO PEOPLE STOP I TRUST YOU WILL RECONSIDER AND INDEFINITELY POSTPONE YOUR VISIT

J P COLEMAN GOVERNOR OF MISSISSIPPI

<sup>1</sup>. "NAACP Maps Court Battle in Mississippi," *Montgomery Advertiser*. 24 April 1956. James Plemon Coleman (1914-1991), born in Ackerman, Mississippi, graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1935. He served as the state's attorney general from 1950 to 1956 and was governor from 1956 to 1960. President Johnson later appointed him to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

**Source:**

MLKP, MBU, Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers, 1954-1968, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, Boston, Mass.

# To James P. Coleman

**AUTHOR:**

KING, MARTIN LUTHER, JR.

**DATE:**

APRIL 24, 1956

**HOW DO WE DETERMINE CONJECTURED INFORMATION? ?****LOCATION:**

MONTGOMERY, ALA.

**GENRE:**

LETTER

**[VIEW DOCUMENT](#)**

## Details

*HON J P COLEMAN*

*GOVERNOR OF MISSISSIPPI*

*JACKSON MISS*

YOUR TELEGRAM WAS RECEIVED, AND CONTENTS HAVE BEEN NOTICED VERY SCRUTINIZINGLY FIRST, I MUST SAY THAT I AM NOT SCHEDULED TO SPEAK IN JACKSON MISSISSIPPI. WHEN THE INVITATION WAS EXTENDED SOME MONTHS AGO I MADE IT CLEAR THAT I COULD NOT ACCEPT THE INVITATION BECAUSE OF A PREVIOUS COMMITMENT.1HOWEVER, IF I HAD ACCEPTED THE INVITATION I WOULD FEEL IT MY MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO COME TO MISSISSIPPI IN SPITE OF YOUR MOST CAUTIOUS WARNING. YOU STATED THAT IN VIEW OF MY RECORD MY COMING TO MISSISSIPPI WOULD BE A GREAT INJUSTICE TO THE NEGRO PEOPLE. I THINK IF YOU WOULD OBSERVE MY RECORD VERY CAREFULLY YOU WOULD DISCOVER THAT {IT.} IS MORE THE RECORD OF A PEACE MAKER THAN A PEACE BREAKER. THE MOST GLARING THING APPEARING IN MY RECORD IS THAT I AM CONCERNED ABOUT ACHIEVING JUSTICE FAIR PLAY AND EQUALITY FOR ALL PEOPLE THROUGH LEGAL AND NON VIOLENT METHODS. THE PHILOSOPHY UNDERGIRDING MY STAND IS DEEPLY ROUTED IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. I HAVE STATED MORE THAN ONCE THAT IN OUR STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE THAT OUR WEAPON MUST BE THE WEAPON OF LOVE. CERTAINLY I THINK THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI COULD WELL PROFIT FROM A GOSPEL OF LOVE. THAT IS THE PIVOTAL POINT AROUND WHICH MY WHOLE PHILOSOPHY REVOLVES AND IF I WERE COMING TO MISSISSIPPI I WOULD BE PREACHING SUCH A GOSPEL. I AM QUITE GRATIFIED TO LEARN, ACCORDING TO YOUR TELEGRAM, THAT RACIAL CONDITIONS ARE MORE PEACEFUL IN MISSISSIPPI THAN EVER BEFORE. I WOULD ASK YOU TO CONSIDER, HOWEVER, THAT PEACE IS NOT NEARLY THE ABSENCE OF SOME NEGATIVE FORCE-- TENSION, CONFUSION, THE MURDERING OF EMMETT TILL, AND THE REVEREND

GEORGE LEE--BUT THE PRESENCE OF SOME POSITIVE FORCE--LOVE, JUSTICE, AND GOODWILL.<sup>2</sup>

SINCERELY  
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

1. See J. F. Redmon to King, 14 March 1956; and King to Redmon, 27 March 1956.
2. Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old Chicagoan visiting his uncle, was murdered on 28 August 1955, purportedly for acting disrespectfully toward a white woman. George Lee, an African-American minister and voting rights activist in Mississippi, was shot and killed on 7 May 1955.

**Source:**

JPCP, Ms-Ar, James P. Coleman Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.