



Books and Manuscripts (1742)

September 21, 2022 EST, Freeman's

Viewing:

The exhibition will be on view by appointment at our [1600 West Girard Avenue](#) location from September 16 to September 20 by appointment only.

To make an appointment, please contact Adam Dias at adias@freemansauction.com

Lot 2

Estimate: \$7000 - \$10000 (plus Buyer's Premium)

[African-Americana] [King, Martin Luther, Jr., and Coretta Scott King] Hassler, Alfred Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story

A rare copy of this landmark comic book on the Montgomery Bus Boycott and nonviolent resistance, signed by both Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King

"In Montgomery, Alabama, 50,000 Negroes found a new way to work for freedom, without violence and without hating. Because they did, they put new hope in all men who seek brotherhood, and who know you don't build it with bullets. No one person made the Montgomery Story, but one man's name stood out among the hundreds who worked so hard and unselfishly. That man was 29-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr., a minister of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and President of the Montgomery Improvement Association."

Nyack, New York: Fellowship of Reconciliation, (1957). First and only edition (one of 250,000 copies printed). Tall 4to. Unpaginated (16 pp.). Printed comic book, inscribed on front wrapper by Martin Luther King, Jr., and signed below by his wife, Coretta Scott King; date added below each signature at a later time in another hand: Dr. King's dated 1958, Coretta's dated 1985. Illustrated by Sy Barry; letters by John Duffy. Original limp illustrated self wrappers, creased from contemporary folds, a few scattered short closed tears, sello-tape-repaired closed tear on front wrapper and second leaf, small open tear from same throughout remaining leaves; leaves lightly toned.

A highly influential and historic comic book used to teach the tactics and power of nonviolent resistance during the Civil Rights Movement and beyond, inscribed by Martin Luther King, Jr., and signed by his wife, Coretta Scott King.

Published in December 1957 and written by Alfred Hassler, executive secretary and director of publications for the pacifist and interfaith justice organization Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), and Benton Resnik, *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* chronicles the 13-month-long Montgomery Bus Boycott. This mass protest began with the arrest of Rosa Parks for refusing to give up her seat to a white man, on December 1, 1955, and ended over a year later, on December 20, 1956, with the Supreme Court ruling that ended segregation on public buses. The final pages include an account of "The Montgomery Method" of nonviolent resistance through the telling of its inspiration from the philosophy of nonviolence practiced by Mahatma Gandhi, as well as a four-page primer on its practical application.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott was organized by the

Montgomery Improvement Association and its president, Martin Luther King, Jr. Its tactics of mass nonviolent protest served as a blueprint to challenge segregation and discrimination throughout the South, and propelled King to national recognition.

The comic's formulation was initiated by Hassler and the Reverend Glenn Smiley, FoR's field secretary, both of whom were involved in the boycott and wanted its story to reach a wider audience. The use of a comic book format was a somewhat risky choice at the time as only three years before televised Senate hearings were held that investigated the connection between the consumption of comic books and juvenile delinquency, and that led to backlash against the medium. Nonetheless, Hasseler and the FoR understood that the comic format held the potential for their message of non-violence to reach the widest possible audience. Hassler and Resnik collaborated on the text, and recruited The Phantom illustrator Sy Barry to create the art. When they completed their first draft they sent a copy to Dr. King for his input, and he promptly replied with suggestions that were then incorporated into the final published work. Only a single printing of 250,000 copies was made, and they were distributed widely to schools, churches, and civil rights groups, especially those who taught nonviolence workshops in the South, where it proved incredibly influential to activists, including future Congressman John Lewis. A Spanish language version of this comic book, telling the same story, but utilizing a different artist, was published not long after this in an edition of 125,000 for distribution in Latin America.

Less than a year following the publication of this comic, on September 17, 1958, Dr. King published his acclaimed memoir of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*.

Copies of the original comic book are uncommon, and mainly reside in institutions. Copies signed by Dr. King very rarely come to auction. Copies signed by both he and his wife, Coretta, are likewise incredibly rare, and it is possible that this is a unique example to feature both of their signatures. We have located only two other copies of this comic book on Rare Book Hub that are signed by Dr. King alone, and only this copy includes the additional signature of Coretta Scott.