

Mrs. Charles J. DiGiola  
215 Manor Road  
Birmingham, Michigan

April 21, 1966

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
1/2 5th Dexter Avenue  
Montgomery, Alabama

My dear Dr. King:

In every step of the development of human society, a people, finding themselves subjects of oppression, struggle to find the freedom their souls yearn after. In their struggle, they seek a symbol of their desires, to impart to them strength and courage for the battle to their goal.

My husband and I see you as the symbol of the American Negro's desires. We understand the heartbeat of your people, and their cry for freedom; for the soul must be free; it is a law. We greatly admire your cause, and what you have accomplished in bringing a higher level of understanding among the peoples of the world.

Another man, in another era, stood as the symbol of your ancestors' desires for freedom: John Henry. Whether mythological or real, he symbolizes to all people the entire past of the American Negro: his suffering, his selflessness, his strength, courage, and power.

My husband, Charles J. DiGiola, has held the image of John Henry in his heart since childhood, the very essence of the American Negro's faith, hope, courage, and strength. That image forced so clearly in his soul, that he was inspired several years ago to bring John Henry into expression as a piece of wood sculpture, measuring 21½ inches high. I enclose two photographs of that sculpture.

This John Henry characterizes one's having given everything that he is capable of giving, through much pain and suffering. His heart aching, he falls, drained. With effort he rises again. Through the darkness of abject despair, the light of hope shines to his faltering consciousness. He is lifted up, resurrected. He finds peace, and his soul is at rest.

Since you are the latter-day symbol, we would like to share with you the inspiration that is in this John Henry.

We are planning a limited, numbered edition of this sculpture, cast in bronze. We request the honor and privilege of presenting

to you the Number 1 casting, as an expression of our high regard for your earned place among the peoples of the world, representing the whole of the Negro's faith, hope, courage, and strength, as they go forward to their resurrection.

Respectfully,

*Greta B. DiGiola*

Mrs. Charles J. DiGiola