Twitter Thread by ■M■LADE



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@Vickie___O

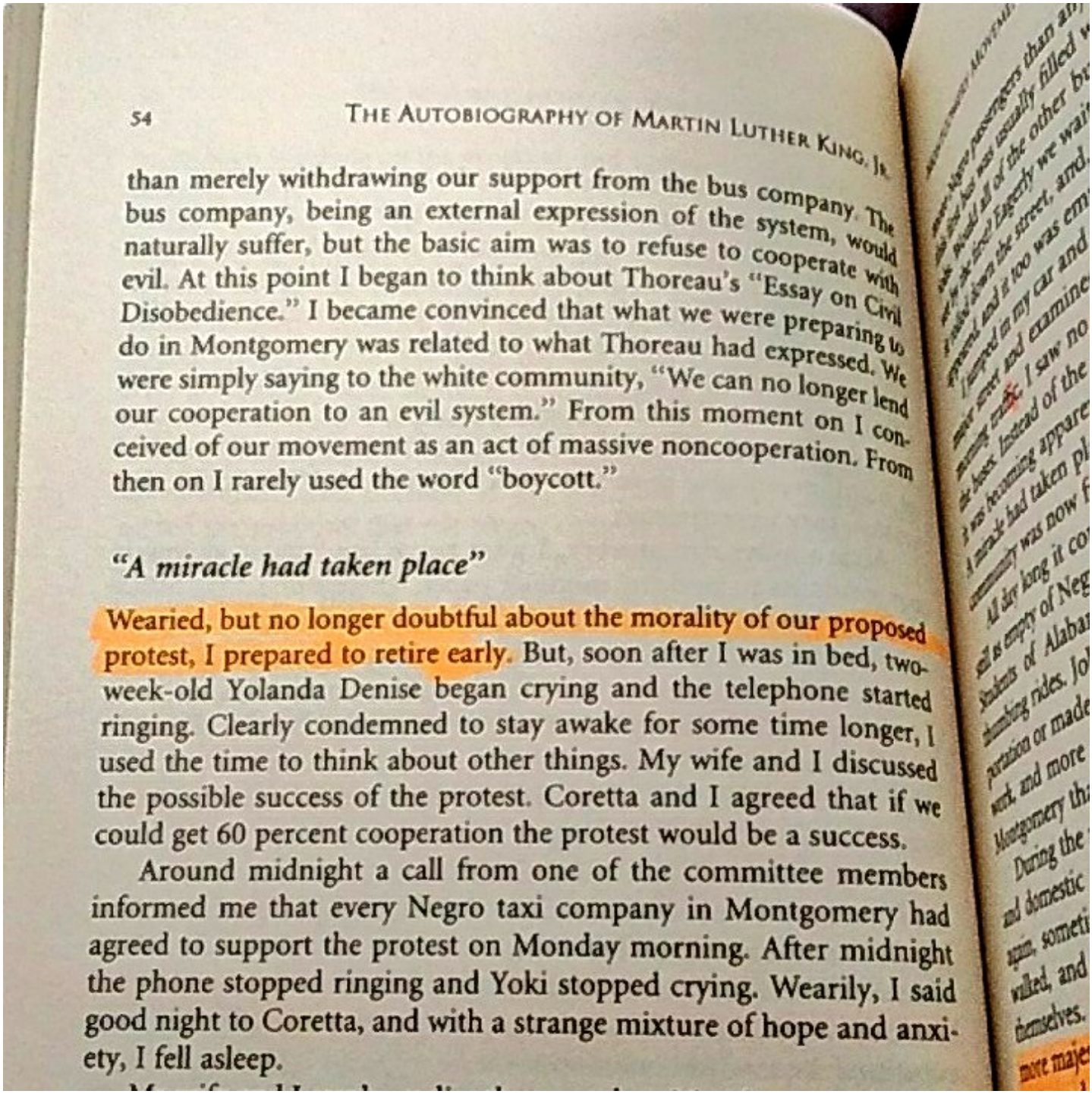
Excerpts from The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. to help shed light on the way to go as regard the #EndSARS #ReformPoliceNG protest going on across the country.

A thread.

Before the Boycott started, Martin Luther King Jr. thought about the morality of the method of protesting - the Boycott.

In spite of the fact that the Black community had a legitimate demand, they still thought about the morality of their method.

Would anyone suffer unjustly?



54 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

than merely withdrawing our support from the bus company. The bus company, being an external expression of the system, would naturally suffer, but the basic aim was to refuse to cooperate with evil. At this point I began to think about Thoreau's "Essay on Civil Disobedience." I became convinced that what we were preparing to do in Montgomery was related to what Thoreau had expressed. We were simply saying to the white community, "We can no longer lend our cooperation to an evil system." From this moment on I conceived of our movement as an act of massive noncooperation. From then on I rarely used the word "boycott."

"A miracle had taken place"

Wearied, but no longer doubtful about the morality of our proposed protest, I prepared to retire early. But, soon after I was in bed, two-week-old Yolanda Denise began crying and the telephone started ringing. Clearly condemned to stay awake for some time longer, I used the time to think about other things. My wife and I discussed the possible success of the protest. Coretta and I agreed that if we could get 60 percent cooperation the protest would be a success.

Around midnight a call from one of the committee members informed me that every Negro taxi company in Montgomery had agreed to support the protest on Monday morning. After midnight the phone stopped ringing and Yoki stopped crying. Wearily, I said good night to Coretta, and with a strange mixture of hope and anxiety, I fell asleep.

On the first day of the protest, Martin Luther King Jr. noticed that at the peak of the morning traffic, no more than eight Negro passengers rode the bus.

Almost everyone in the Black community cooperated.

Now, what happened next?

set by the first? Eagerly we waited for the next bus. ... it rolled down the street, and, like the first, it was empty. A third bus appeared, and it too was empty of all but two white passengers.

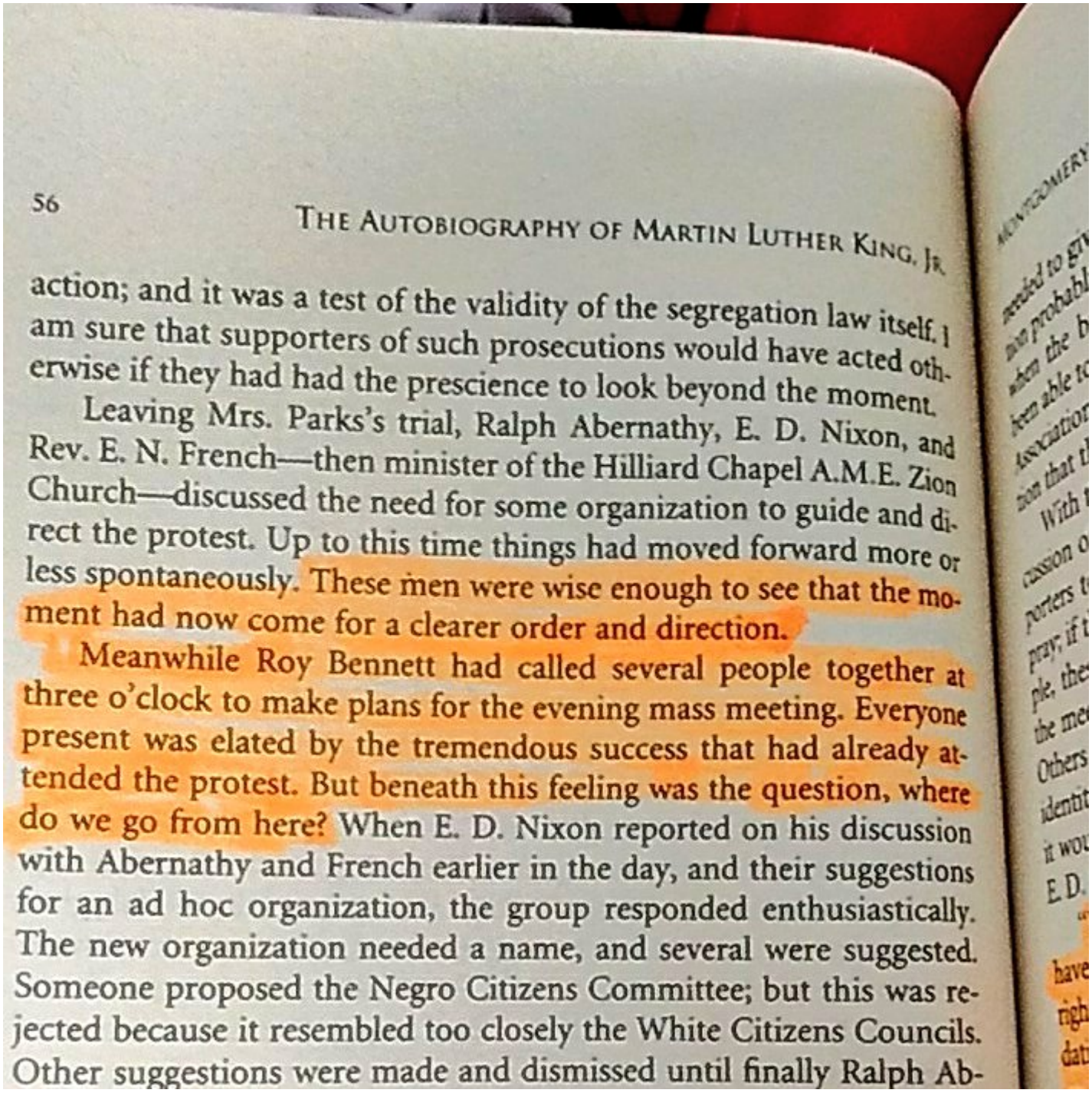
I jumped in my car and for almost an hour I cruised down every major street and examined every passing bus. At the peak of the morning traffic, I saw no more than eight Negro passengers riding the buses. Instead of the 60 percent cooperation we had hoped for, it was becoming apparent that we had reached almost 100 percent. A miracle had taken place. The once dormant and quiescent Negro community was now fully awake.

All day long it continued. At the afternoon peak the buses were still as empty of Negro passengers as they had been in the morning. Students of Alabama State College were cheerfully walking or thumbing rides. Job holders had either found other means of transportation or made their way on foot. Men were seen riding mules to work, and more than one horse-drawn buggy drove the streets of Montgomery that day.

During the rush hours the sidewalks were crowded with laborers and domestic workers trudging patiently to their jobs and home again, sometimes as much as twelve miles. They knew why they walked, and the knowledge was evident in the way they carried themselves. And as I watched them I knew that there is nothing more majestic than the determined courage of individuals willing to suffer and sacrifice for their freedom and dignity.

Around nine-thirty in the morning I tore myself from the action of the city streets and headed for the crowded police court. Here Mrs. Parks was being tried for disobeying the city segregation ordi-

Leaders in the community discussed the need for some organisation to guide and direct the protest because everything happened spontaneously.



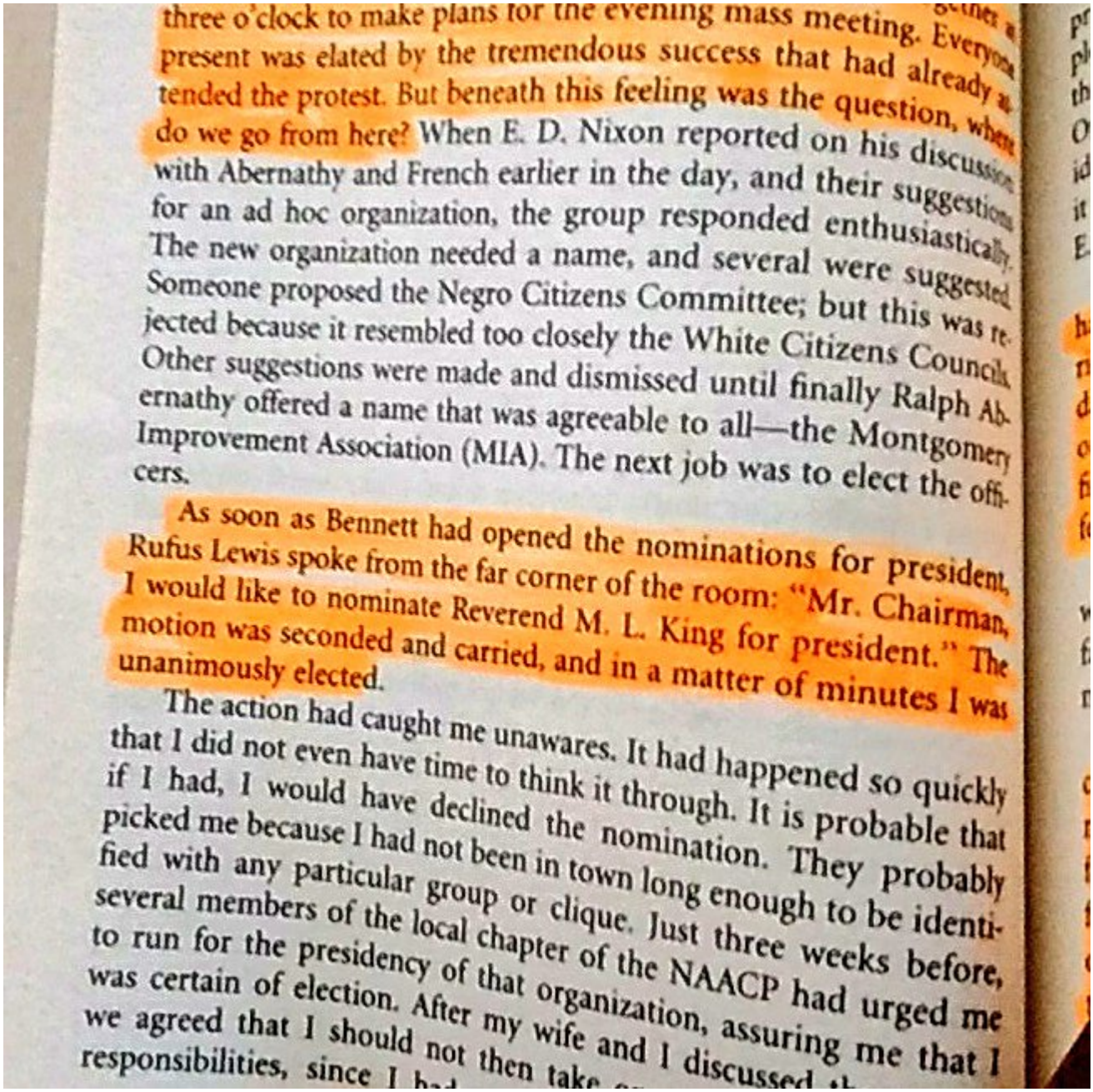
action; and it was a test of the validity of the segregation law itself. I am sure that supporters of such prosecutions would have acted otherwise if they had had the prescience to look beyond the moment.

Leaving Mrs. Parks's trial, Ralph Abernathy, E. D. Nixon, and Rev. E. N. French—then minister of the Hilliard Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church—discussed the need for some organization to guide and direct the protest. Up to this time things had moved forward more or less spontaneously. These men were wise enough to see that the moment had now come for a clearer order and direction.

Meanwhile Roy Bennett had called several people together at three o'clock to make plans for the evening mass meeting. Everyone present was elated by the tremendous success that had already attended the protest. But beneath this feeling was the question, where do we go from here? When E. D. Nixon reported on his discussion with Abernathy and French earlier in the day, and their suggestions for an ad hoc organization, the group responded enthusiastically. The new organization needed a name, and several were suggested. Someone proposed the Negro Citizens Committee; but this was rejected because it resembled too closely the White Citizens Councils. Other suggestions were made and dismissed until finally Ralph Ab-

They decided to elect officers and Martin Luther King Jr. was made the President of the Association.

They formed an ad hoc organisation called the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA).



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As soon as Bennett had opened the nominations for president, Rufus Lewis spoke from the far corner of the room: "Mr. Chairman, I would like to nominate Reverend M. L. King for president." The motion was seconded and carried, and in a matter of minutes I was unanimously elected.

The action had caught me unawares. It had happened so quickly that I did not even have time to think it through. It is probable that if I had, I would have declined the nomination. They probably picked me because I had not been in town long enough to be identified with any particular group or clique. Just three weeks before, several members of the local chapter of the NAACP had urged me to run for the presidency of that organization, assuring me that I was certain of election. After my wife and I discussed [illegible] we agreed that I should not then take [illegible] responsibilities, since I had

During the course of the meeting they suggested that the identities of the leaders be concealed but this suggestion was rejected.

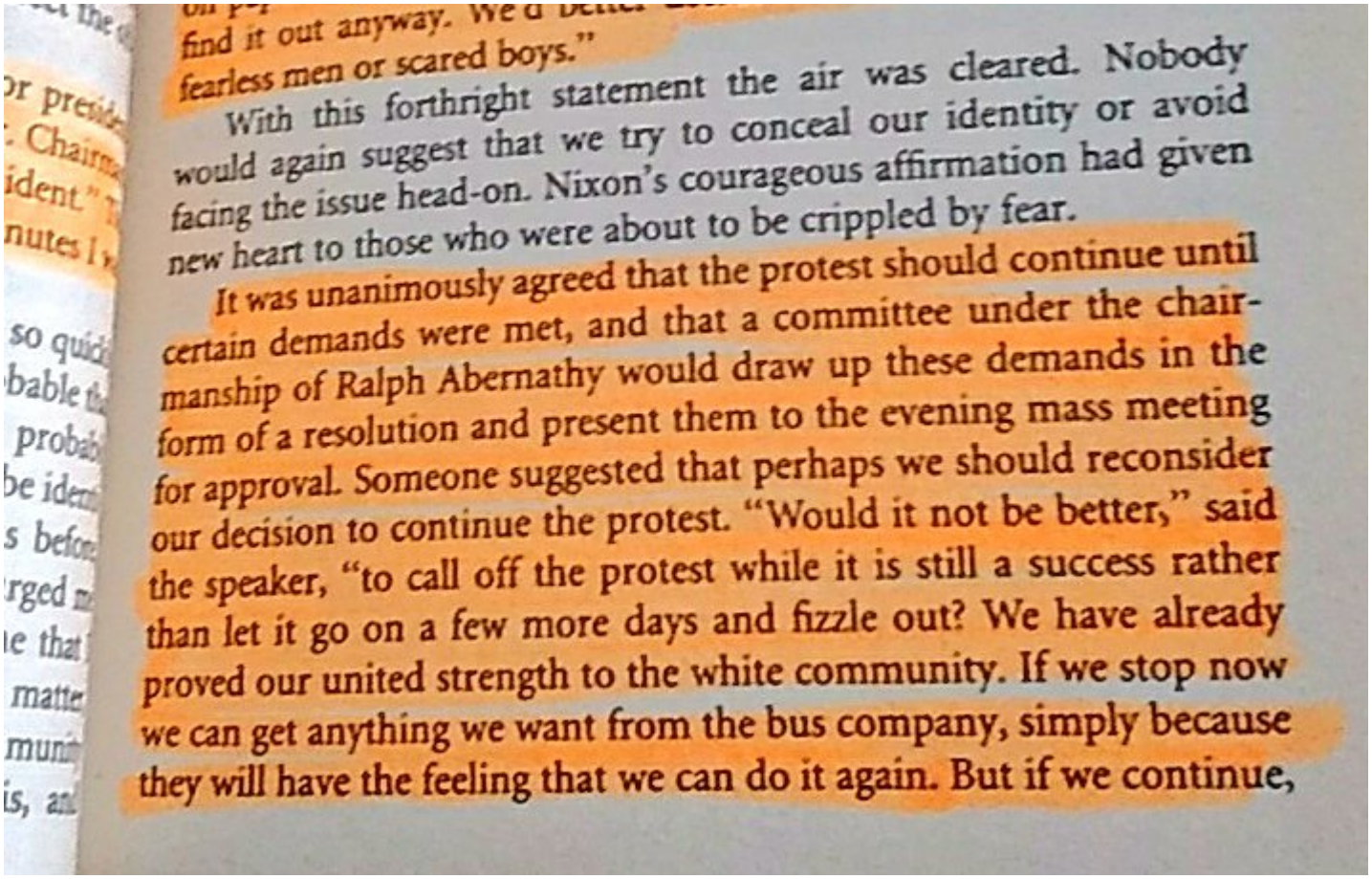
needed to give more attention to my church work. Coretta's opposition probably resulted in one of the luckiest decisions of my life. For when the bus protest movement broke out, I would hardly have been able to accept the presidency of the Montgomery Improvement Association without lending weight to the oft-made white contention that the whole thing was an NAACP conspiracy.

With these organizational matters behind us, we turned to a discussion of the evening meeting. Several people, not wanting the reporters to know our future moves, suggested that we just sing and pray; if there were specific recommendations to be made to the people, these could be mimeographed and passed out secretly during the meeting. This, they felt, would leave the reporters in the dark. Others urged that something should be done to conceal the true identity of the leaders, feeling that if no particular name was revealed it would be safer for all involved. After a rather lengthy discussion, E. D. Nixon rose impatiently:

"We are acting like little boys," he said. "Somebody's name will have to be known, and if we are afraid we might just as well fold up right now. We must also be men enough to discuss our recommendations in the open; this idea of secretly passing something around on paper is a lot of bunk. The white folks are eventually going to find it out anyway. We'd better decide now if we are going to be fearless men or scared boys."

With this forthright statement the air was cleared. Nobody would again suggest that we try to conceal our identity or avoid facing the issue head-on. Nixon's courageous affirmation had given

They deliberated on whether or not to continue with the protest and on the formulation of their demands.

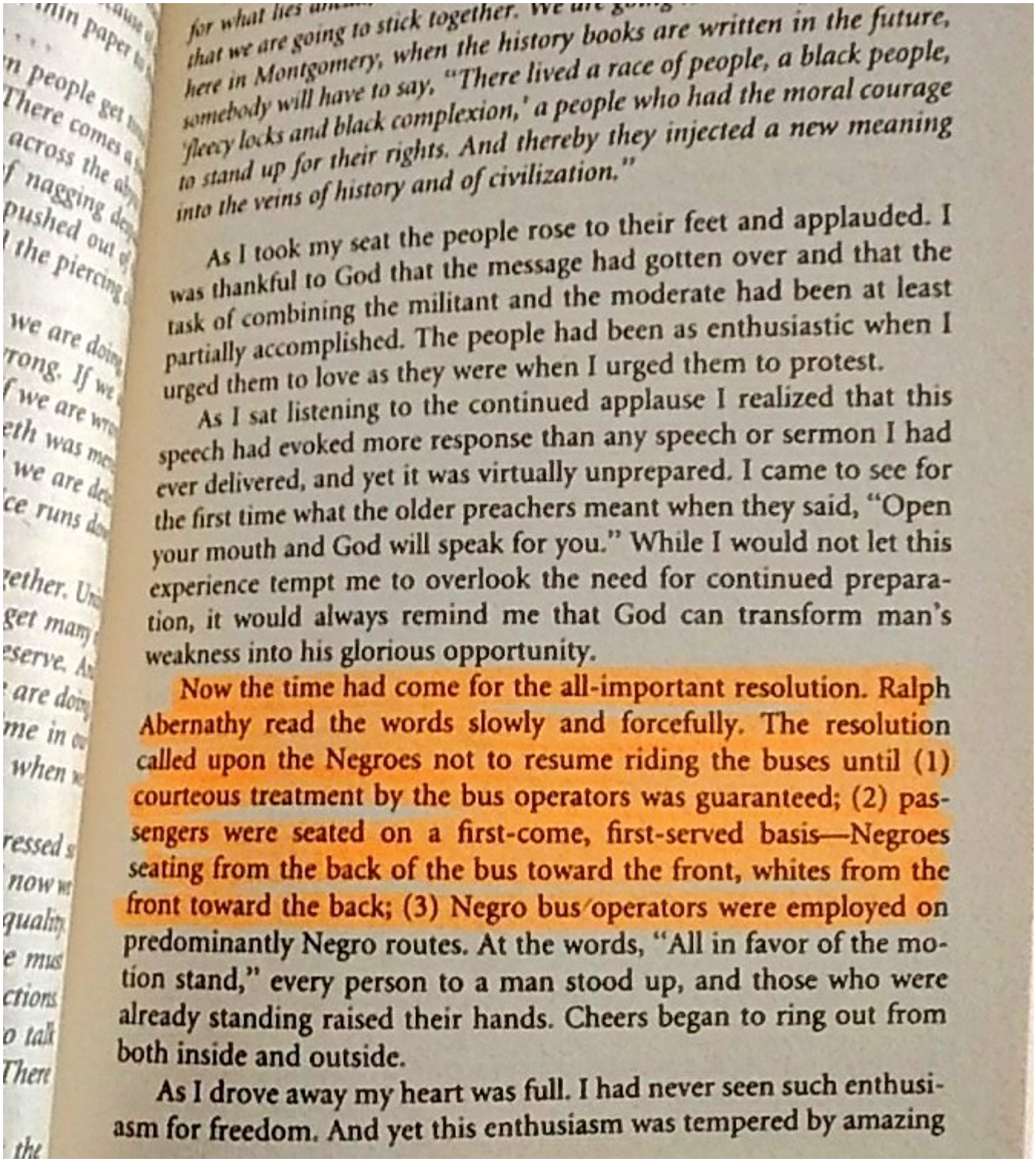


find it out anyway. We'd better
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With this forthright statement the air was cleared. Nobody would again suggest that we try to conceal our identity or avoid facing the issue head-on. Nixon's courageous affirmation had given new heart to those who were about to be crippled by fear.

It was unanimously agreed that the protest should continue until certain demands were met, and that a committee under the chairmanship of Ralph Abernathy would draw up these demands in the form of a resolution and present them to the evening mass meeting for approval. Someone suggested that perhaps we should reconsider our decision to continue the protest. "Would it not be better," said the speaker, "to call off the protest while it is still a success rather than let it go on a few more days and fizzle out? We have already proved our united strength to the white community. If we stop now we can get anything we want from the bus company, simply because they will have the feeling that we can do it again. But if we continue,

The meeting was well attended and everyone was in support of the resolution.



for what lies ahead. We are going to stick together. We are going
that we are going to stick together. We are going
here in Montgomery, when the history books are written in the future,
somebody will have to say, "There lived a race of people, a black people,
'fleecy locks and black complexion,' a people who had the moral courage
to stand up for their rights. And thereby they injected a new meaning
into the veins of history and of civilization."

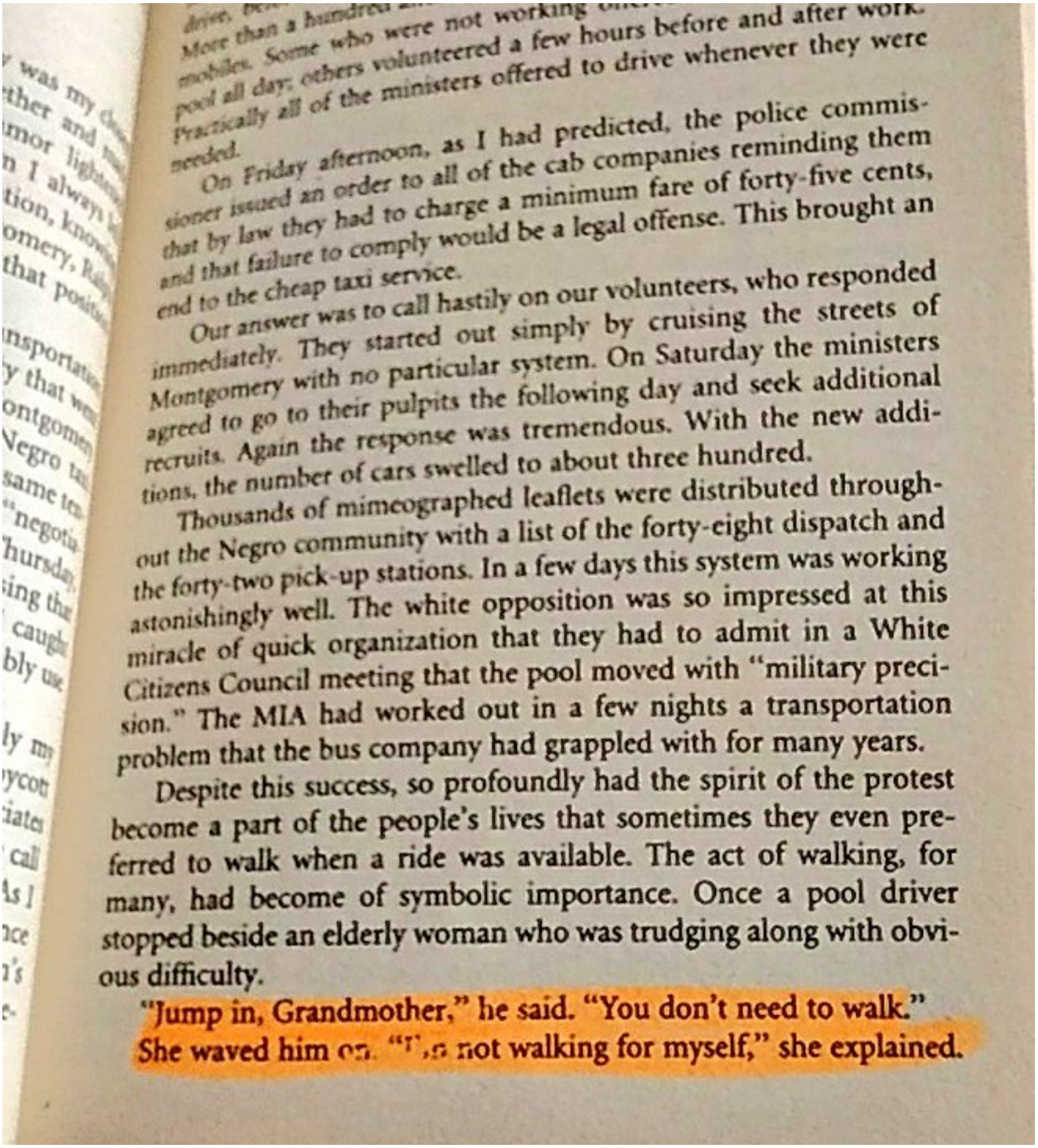
As I took my seat the people rose to their feet and applauded. I was thankful to God that the message had gotten over and that the task of combining the militant and the moderate had been at least partially accomplished. The people had been as enthusiastic when I urged them to love as they were when I urged them to protest.

As I sat listening to the continued applause I realized that this speech had evoked more response than any speech or sermon I had ever delivered, and yet it was virtually unprepared. I came to see for the first time what the older preachers meant when they said, "Open your mouth and God will speak for you." While I would not let this experience tempt me to overlook the need for continued preparation, it would always remind me that God can transform man's weakness into his glorious opportunity.

Now the time had come for the all-important resolution. Ralph Abernathy read the words slowly and forcefully. The resolution called upon the Negroes not to resume riding the buses until (1) courteous treatment by the bus operators was guaranteed; (2) passengers were seated on a first-come, first-served basis—Negroes seating from the back of the bus toward the front, whites from the front toward the back; (3) Negro bus operators were employed on predominantly Negro routes. At the words, "All in favor of the motion stand," every person to a man stood up, and those who were already standing raised their hands. Cheers began to ring out from both inside and outside.

As I drove away my heart was full. I had never seen such enthusiasm for freedom. And yet this enthusiasm was tempered by amazing

Everyone keyed into the vision of the protest.



More than a hundred [illegible] mobiles. Some who were not working [illegible] pool all day; others volunteered a few hours before and after work. Practically all of the ministers offered to drive whenever they were needed.

On Friday afternoon, as I had predicted, the police commissioner issued an order to all of the cab companies reminding them that by law they had to charge a minimum fare of forty-five cents, and that failure to comply would be a legal offense. This brought an end to the cheap taxi service.

Our answer was to call hastily on our volunteers, who responded immediately. They started out simply by cruising the streets of Montgomery with no particular system. On Saturday the ministers agreed to go to their pulpits the following day and seek additional recruits. Again the response was tremendous. With the new additions, the number of cars swelled to about three hundred.

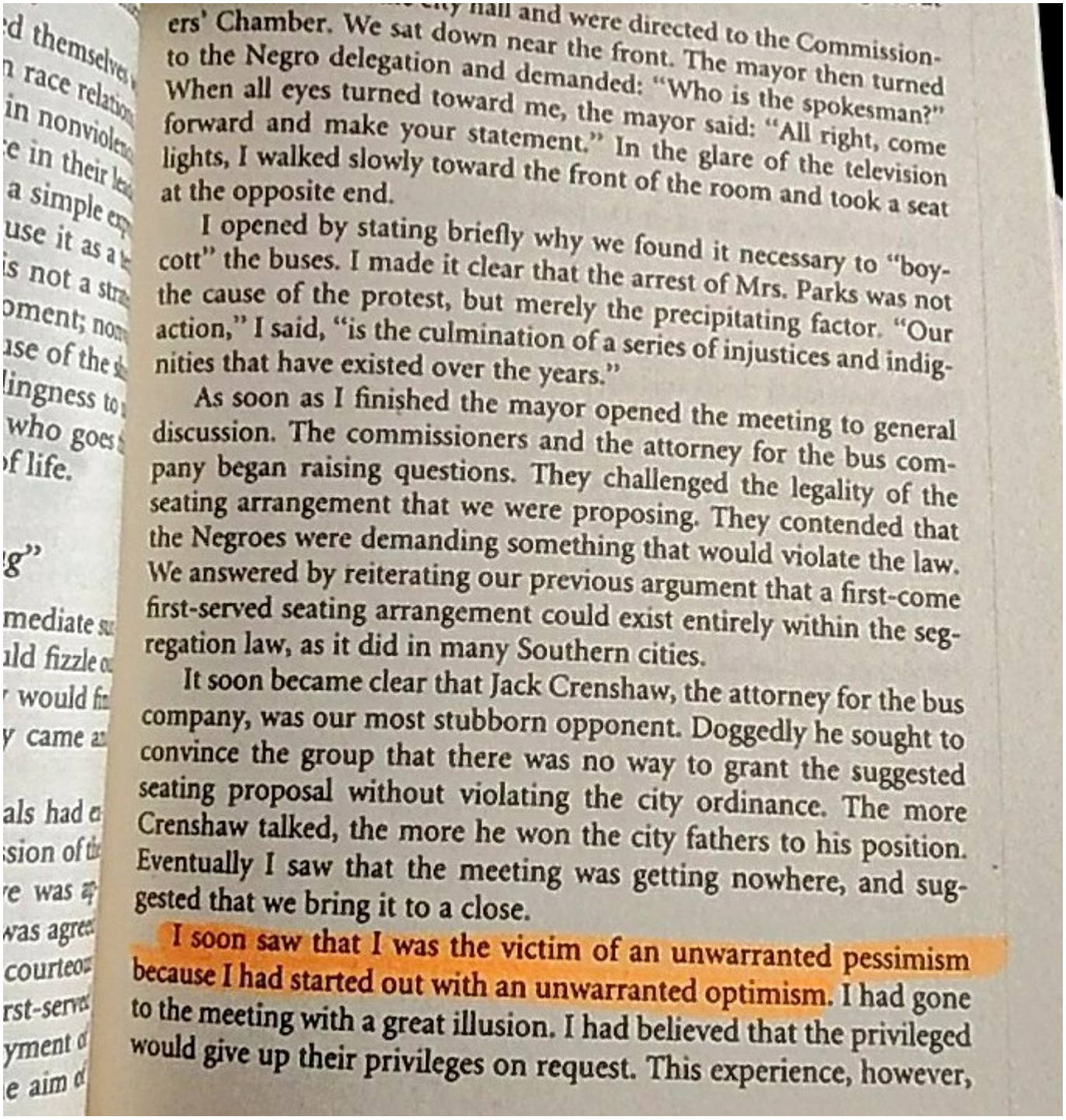
Thousands of mimeographed leaflets were distributed throughout the Negro community with a list of the forty-eight dispatch and the forty-two pick-up stations. In a few days this system was working astonishingly well. The white opposition was so impressed at this miracle of quick organization that they had to admit in a White Citizens Council meeting that the pool moved with "military precision." The MIA had worked out in a few nights a transportation problem that the bus company had grappled with for many years.

Despite this success, so profoundly had the spirit of the protest become a part of the people's lives that sometimes they even preferred to walk when a ride was available. The act of walking, for many, had become of symbolic importance. Once a pool driver stopped beside an elderly woman who was trudging along with obvious difficulty.

"Jump in, Grandmother," he said. "You don't need to walk."

She waved him on. "I'm not walking for myself," she explained.

The leaders of the Association met with the City Officials and tried to negotiate.



ers' Chamber. We sat down near the front. The mayor then turned to the Negro delegation and demanded: "Who is the spokesman?" When all eyes turned toward me, the mayor said: "All right, come forward and make your statement." In the glare of the television lights, I walked slowly toward the front of the room and took a seat at the opposite end.

I opened by stating briefly why we found it necessary to "boycott" the buses. I made it clear that the arrest of Mrs. Parks was not the cause of the protest, but merely the precipitating factor. "Our action," I said, "is the culmination of a series of injustices and indignities that have existed over the years."

As soon as I finished the mayor opened the meeting to general discussion. The commissioners and the attorney for the bus company began raising questions. They challenged the legality of the seating arrangement that we were proposing. They contended that the Negroes were demanding something that would violate the law. We answered by reiterating our previous argument that a first-come first-served seating arrangement could exist entirely within the segregation law, as it did in many Southern cities.

It soon became clear that Jack Crenshaw, the attorney for the bus company, was our most stubborn opponent. Doggedly he sought to convince the group that there was no way to grant the suggested seating proposal without violating the city ordinance. The more Crenshaw talked, the more he won the city fathers to his position. Eventually I saw that the meeting was getting nowhere, and suggested that we bring it to a close.

I soon saw that I was the victim of an unwarranted pessimism because I had started out with an unwarranted optimism. I had gone to the meeting with a great illusion. I had believed that the privileged would give up their privileges on request. This experience, however,

The movement was met by tough resistance from the government and the other groups.

thoven, she said, kept her company when she was alone. Calm and unruffled, Coretta moved quietly about the business of keeping the household going. When I needed to talk things out, she was ready to listen, or to offer suggestions when I asked for them.

"Conquer by dividing"

The height of the attempt to conquer by dividing came on Sunday, January 22, when the city commissioners shocked the Negro community by announcing in the local newspaper that they had met with a group of prominent Negro ministers and worked out a settlement. Many people were convinced the boycott was over. It was soon clear that this announcement was a calculated design to get the Negroes back on the buses Sunday morning. The city commission felt certain that once a sizable number of Negroes began riding the buses, the boycott would end.

I began to wonder whether any of my associates had betrayed me and made an agreement in my absence. I needed to find out if a group of Negro ministers had actually met with the city commission. After about an hour of calling here and there we were able to identify the "three prominent Negro ministers." They were neither prominent nor were they members of the MIA.

It was now about eleven o'clock on Saturday night. Something had to be done to let the people know that the article they would read the next morning was false. I asked one group to call all the Negro ministers of the city and urge them to announce in church

Martin Luther King's house was bombed.

"The bombing"

Three nights later, on January 30, I left home a little before seven to attend our Monday evening mass meeting at the First Baptist Church. A member of my congregation had come to the parsonage to keep my wife company in my absence. About nine-thirty they heard a noise in front that sounded as though someone had thrown a brick. In a matter of seconds an explosion rocked the house. A bomb had gone off on the porch.

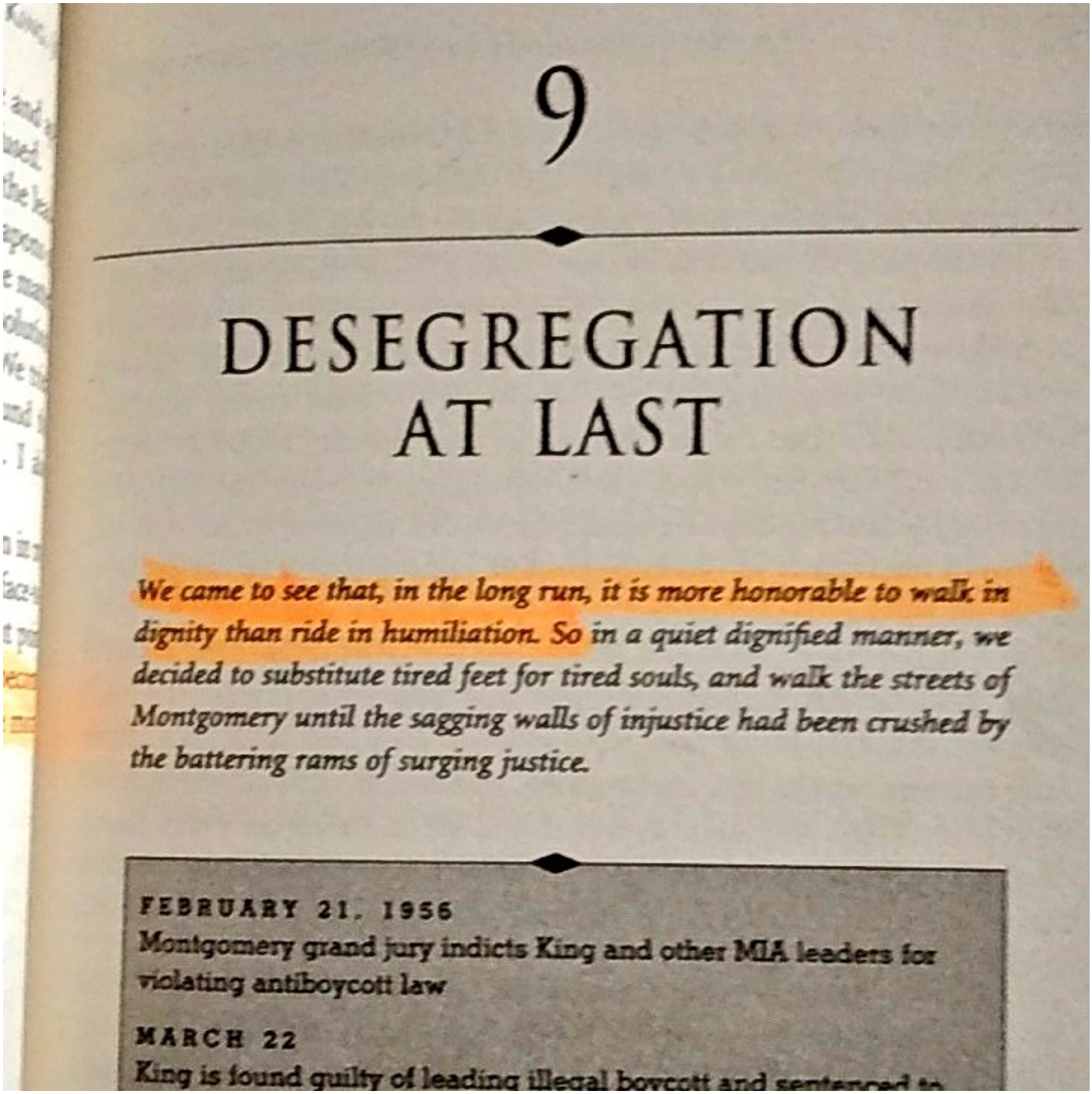
After word of the bombing reached the mass meeting, everybody attempted to keep it from me. People looked at me and then away; one or two seemed about to approach me and then changed their minds. Soon I noticed several of my fellow ministers going in and out of the church in a rather unusual manner, and from this I surmised that something had happened. Unable to restrain my curiosity any longer, I called three of my closest associates and urged them to tell me what had happened. I assured them that I was prepared for whatever it was. Ralph Abernathy said hesitantly, "Your house has been bombed."

STATEMENT AT MIA MASS MEETING

I want you to know that if M. L. King had never been born this movement would have taken place. I just happened to be here. You know there comes a time when time itself is ready for change. That time has come in Montgomery, and I had nothing to do with it.

Statement at MIA Mass Meeting, January 30, 1956

Eventually...



9

DESEGREGATION AT LAST

We came to see that, in the long run, it is more honorable to walk in dignity than ride in humiliation. So in a quiet dignified manner, we decided to substitute tired feet for tired souls, and walk the streets of Montgomery until the sagging walls of injustice had been crushed by the battering rams of surging justice.

FEBRUARY 21, 1956
Montgomery grand jury indicts King and other MIA leaders for violating antiboycott law

MARCH 22
King is found guilty of leading illegal boycott and sentenced to

We can pick lessons from this as regard the need for strategy, organisation and leadership.

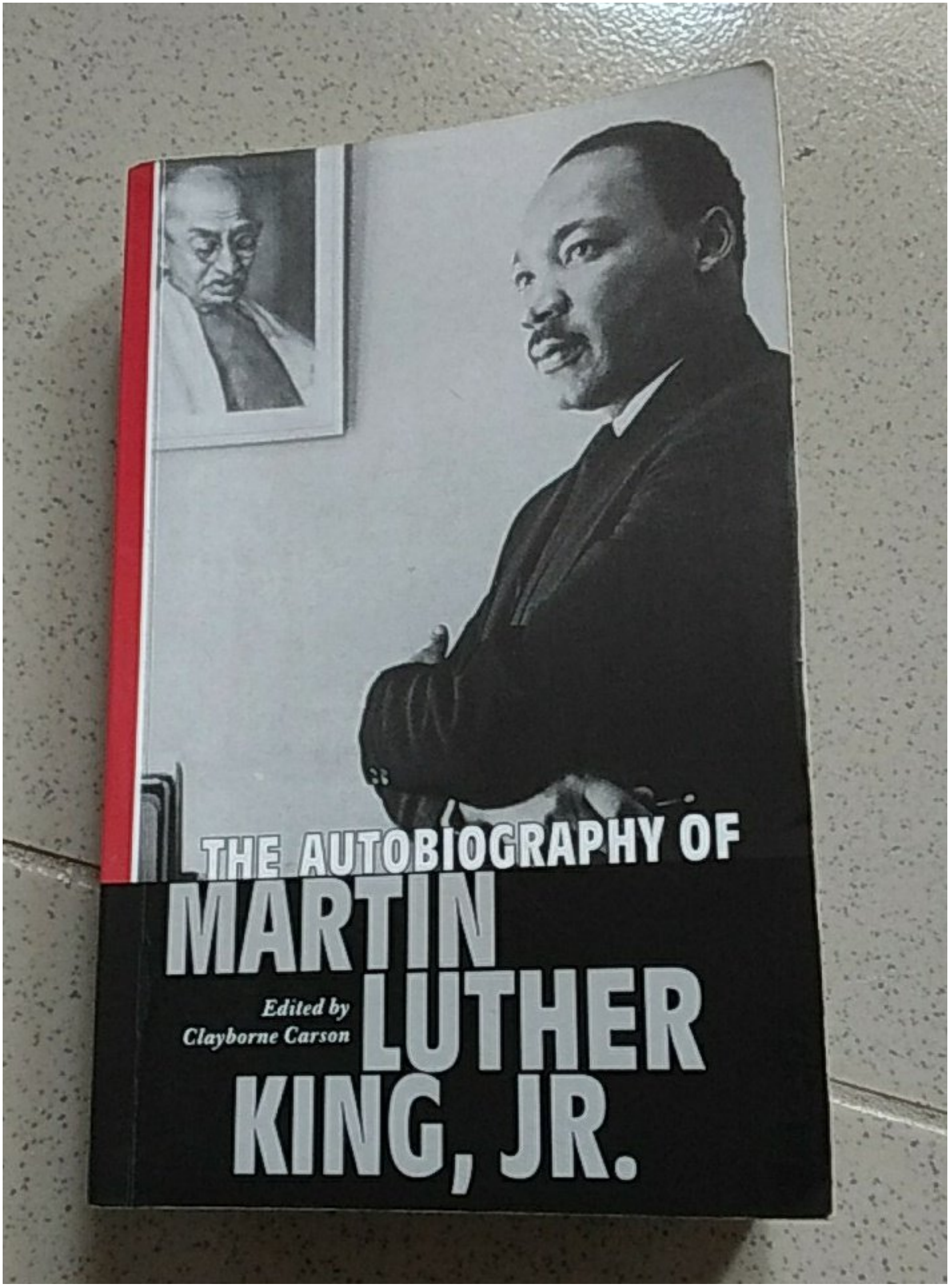
Like someone said this is not a sprint but a marathon.

The Montgomery Boycott lasted for over a year...

#EndSARS
#ReformPoliceNG

To anyone curious enough, the title of the book is The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Edited by Clayborne Carson.


THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
Edited by
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