

December 6, 1938

To the President of the United States
Honorable Franklin Delano Roosevelt
White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear President Roosevelt:

I pray that this letter will get past your secretaries and reach your personal consideration.

Have you time to listen to the problem of one of your millions of fellow-citizens, which will illustrate most clearly one of the problems of democracy in America. I speak not only for myself but for 12,000,000 other citizens.

Briefly, the facts are these:

I am a Negro, the most oppressed, most misunderstood and most neglected section of your population.

I am also a WPA worker, another insecure and often misrepresented group of citizens. I teach on the Workers' Education Project of New York City, a field which has received the constant and devoted support of your wife, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

My main interest, the tradition of my family for three generations, is education, which, I believe, is the basic requirement for the maintenance and extension of democracy.

At present, in order to do a competent teaching job, a job comparable to the work of the established educational institutions, like all other professional WPA workers, I feel the need of more training. To understand the knotty economic and social problems of our country and to interpret these problems clearly and simply to workers makes it imperative that we continue our studies. Our wage standards are such that we are unable to further our education. Those of us who do not have degrees are unable to get them because of the general WPA arrangements. Those of us who have degrees, and yet feel an inadequacy of information and formal training, find it impossible to go further and obtain our Master's Degree.

Sometime ago I applied to the University of North Carolina for admission to their graduate school. They sent me an application blank, on the bottom of which was asked, "Race and Religion". (For your information, I am a confirmed Protestant Episcopalian.) As you know, no Negro has ever been admitted to the University of North Carolina. You may wonder then, why I, a Negro knowing this fact, did make application.

My grandfather, a Union Army soldier, gave his eye-