

"Dear Mr. President", Nashville, Tennessee, January or February 1942

AFS 6441A

A. J. Steel: Dear Mr. President, this is A. J. Steel, a salesman from Nashville, Tennessee. Now that we are at war we are very anxious to do our part for the defense of democracy. We're anxious to serve where we can do the most good. In my opinion, we can do this best by holding government positions that our training fits us best for. There are many efficient Negroes who could do so much for their country in these capacities. Such would not only help the United States directly, but indirectly as well by showing the world that we have a democratic government with all of its people living together, working together, and willing to die together if need be for the common good. Then we can truly secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our prosperity.

Grafton Luby: Dear Mr. President, my name is Grafton Luby. I am a teacher, a secretary of commerce in a defense setup at the 18th Avenue Youth Center. We have three defense classes, one in secretarial commerce, one in homemaking, and the other in the related subjects. They are designed for the purpose of training secretaries and domestics. We are hoping that these classes may continue so that the Negro youth in this city will have an opportunity to prepare himself to do his share in the defense program of his country. And also to prepare himself for the changing condition which must come with peace.

Mrs. C. S. Johnson: Dear Mr. President, I am Mrs. C. S. Johnson, General Chairman of the Nashville Block Organization for Colored Citizens. As you move about the city, we are impressed with the eager response of our people of all classes to each request made of them in the civilian defense program. We have discovered that they believe in you. As Mrs. Roosevelt has recently said, we feel as if we are standing upon a solid rock and that rock is our faith in our fellow citizens.

In the face of this optimism however, we are faithfully met with one increasing fear which we pass onto you. Namely that the continuous flow of information regarding the location and magnitude of our defense industries and production centers is needlessly exposing our vulnerability to the enemy. And this one weakness in our system may blast in a moment this rock of civilian solidarity upon which we are building and upon which our victory must ultimately rest. We appeal to you therefore Mr. President and to the Congress to exercise all just powers to control those items in the daily news and syndicated columns which we Americans can well forego for the present without sacrificing any of our coveted liberties. To the end that we ourselves may know our weaknesses and our enemies may only be aware of our gathering strength.



Arvin Bradford: Dear Mr. President, this is Arvin Bradford, a graduate student, Department of Social Sciences at Fisk University. My loyalty is with the fighting forces of United States. I feel that as a student and as a boys work leader I can keep abreast with what is going on in the world, urge Negro boys to train themselves for skilled jobs, and help defeat the enemy from without. At the same time, I feel that it is my duty to join hands with organizations that are fighting enemies within in our borders. If we stand idly by and permit hostile forces to destroy the principles for which Negro boys are fighting to preserve, I think that we will be defeating our own purposes.

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