

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

AFS 6442B

Lewis Jones: Dear Mr. President, this is Lewis Jones, a social research worker who has been about the country a lot in the last few months and has heard varying opinions and attitudes of Negroes toward the present war and the war effort. And this afternoon we've gotten a group of friends who represent various points of view and we're going to talk it out and argue our various points of view for your benefit. Now the next person you'll hear is Will Gilchreist, a barber, who has opportunity to observe and hear the various opinions regarding the war as Negroes, and express them. And from his experience and the opinions that he's formed, he's going to say what he thinks about the war.

Will Gilchreist: Well, I myself, I'm for it a hundred percent. The war effort, I'm behind it. But it's a lot of people that I hear and come into contact with they're not so hot about it. But I've met several fellows that was down and out and gone to the war, army and come back on furlough and they looking better. For the most part most of them speak well of it. And it's a possibility that some of the people that are against it now and talk when something happens like the incident at Pearl Harbor that'll change their minds. It's changed a lot of them now because they said it was impossible for any foreign nation to attack us and we were safe. The president was a war monger. They were listening to different talkers like Wheeler and [Lindenburgh (?)], but they know now that it is possible for us to be attacked, but they still aren't hot, they're just luke-warm. And maybe something else will happen. If they ever drop any bombs on New York or Frisco I know then that we'll all be into it. ???

Unidentified Man: Tell them they're going to ??? Shook.

Lewis Jones: The next person you're going to hear is Henry Shook, a grocery clerk who has certain attitudes toward the war and the Negroes' position in it that is very interesting.

Henry Shook: I hear Mr. Gilchreist. I wholly agree with him. We've always been loyal to the calls and the war of this which is the greatest war I do believe. I think we should put forth all efforts which has been done by the Negroes in this war and other wars. But I do say, at the present, probably Mr. Hitler or Japan might not be the greatest enemy we have for the simple reason we can't have internal troubles. And unless we work together in and thresh out the little misdemeanors that has been happening prior to the time, we've got to do something to curb the misunderstanding between minor groups and the groups which are oppressed and robbed of opportunities to share here in this country, which is a free country. Although sometimes we are set aside and oppressed and have



it from every angle. So therefore this time, let's do something here at home so that we can make it possible that victory will be equally shared with all, which I'm sure we'll win with cooperation.