

Ms. Towns says she wrote *Scottsboro Unmasked* "to inspire others to tell their story, because much of the African American history has not been told. It has been suppressed. And I think that it's our duty to share that information with people." For the people of Decatur, particularly the African American community, the story told by Ms. Towns really "brought the trials actually home," as she would say.

The Trials' Impact

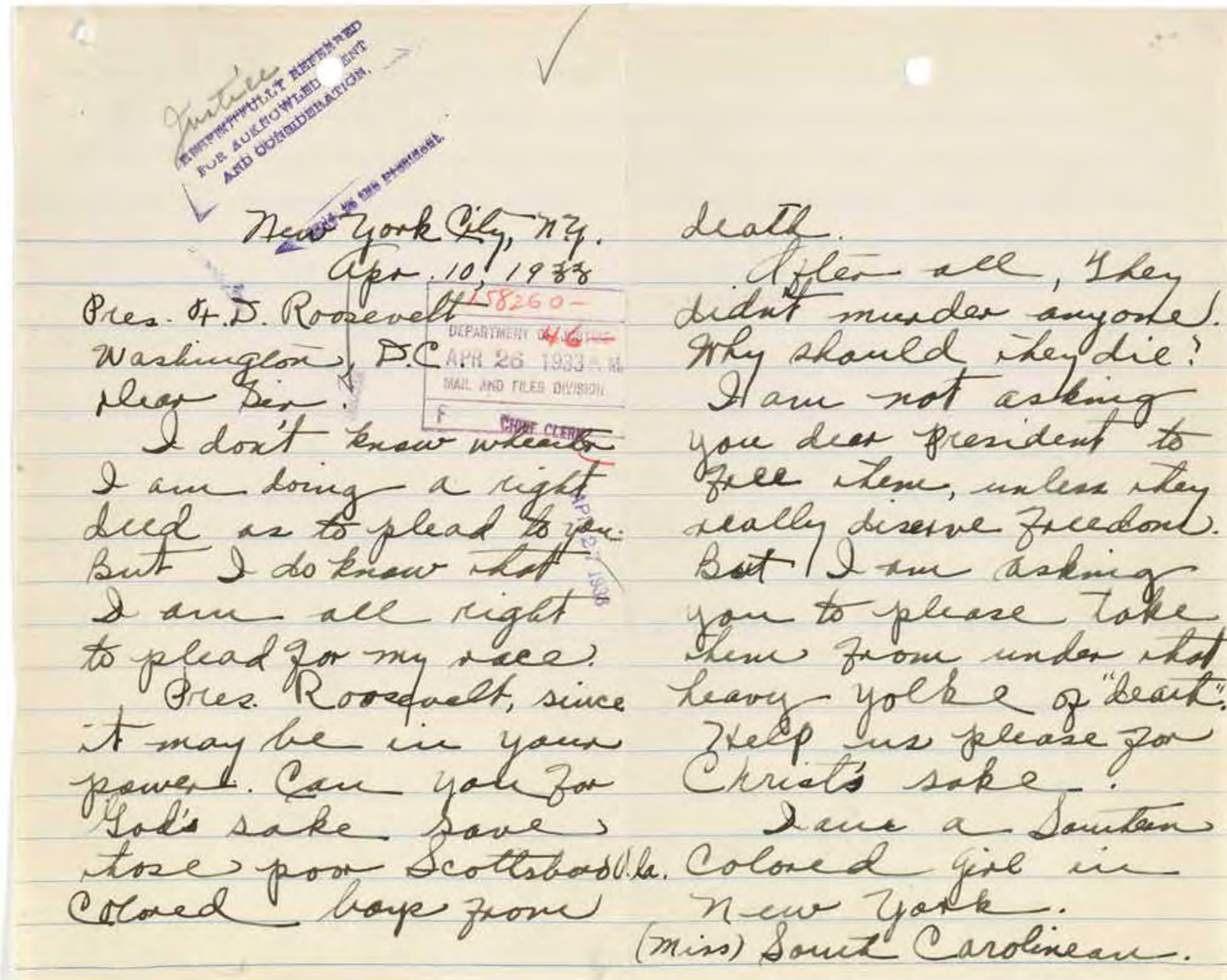
The trial of the Scottsboro Boys had a national impact. People from all over the country held opinions and concerns about the trial, the allegations of corruption and unfair juries, as well as the boys themselves. Racial tension and the terror attacks by the KKK were obviously a product of

the trial, but there was also much support for the young boys. There is a letter on file at the National Archives from a young woman from South Carolina living in New York to President Roosevelt on the boys' behalf in 1933. Other cultural products came from the trial, such as Harper Lee's famous novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*, inspired by the trial in Decatur and the racial tensions of the South in general.

On the surface, the trials for the Scottsboro Boys may not appear directly connected to African American landownership and farming. Regardless of the initial research topic, once interviewing Ms. Peggy Allen Towns, it quickly became evident that this piece of history had a great impact on Decatur, Morgan County, and North Alabama. In order to connect the topics of African American landownership and the trials in Decatur, an examination was conducted of the lists of potential jurors provided by Ms. Towns' research.

In an attempt to combat the gross injustice of the complete omission of African Americans from the jury pool, Samuel Leibowitz, George Chamlee, and their team began searching for upstanding citizens within the Old Town community. The people they were looking for would ideally be men of color that were well-educated and respected, such as physicians, dentists, business owners, pastors, and school principals. Although the Clerk of Court of the Eighth Judicial Circuit, a white man named John H. Green, did testify that he reviewed the more than 2,500 names of potential jurors and did not see a single one referring to a man of color – it was the testimonies of prominent African American citizens that spoke volumes.

In the appendix of her *Scottsboro Unmasked* book, Ms. Towns compiled the names of the men from the four lists provided by Dr. Frank Sykes, Dr. Newlyn E. Cashin, Hewlett J. Banks, and Reverend Lester R. Womack. Combined, the lists record a total of 183 unique names. When cross-referenced with the most contemporary U.S. census in 1930, over half



(Left) "Letter from Miss South Carolinian [Carolinian] to President Franklin Roosevelt Regarding the Scottsboro Case (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 60, General Records of the Department of Justice)