

#### 4. Black Southerners Appeal to President William McKinley for Federal Protection, 1898–1900

Please send relief as soon as possible  
or we perish.

Wilmington N.C. Nov 13, 1898

Wm. McKinley:—President of the United States of America,

Hon—Sir,

I a negro woman of this city, appeal to you from the depths of my heart, to do something in the negro's behalf. The outside world only knows one side of the trouble here, there is no paper to tell the truth about the negro here in this or any other southern state. The negro in this town had no arms, (except pistols perhaps in some instances) with which to defend themselves from the attack of lawless whites. On the 10th Thursday morning between eight and nine oclock, when all negro men had gone to their places of work. The white men led by Col. A. M. Waddell, Jno. D. Bellamy, & S. H. Fishblate marched from the Light Infantry Armory on market street to seventh down seventh to Love & Charity Hall (which was owned by a society of negroes.) And where the negro daily press was.) and set it afire & burnt it up. And firing Guns Winchesters, they also had a Hotchkiss gun & two Colt rapid fire guns. We the negro expected nothing of the kind as they (the whites) had frightened them from the polls saying they would be there with their shot guns, so the few that did vote did so quietly. And we thought after giving up to them and they carried the state it was settled. . . . After destroying the building they went over in Brooklyn another Negro settlement mostly, and began searching every one and if you did not submit, would be shot down on the spot. They searched all the negro churches. And to day (Sunday) we dare not go to our places of worship. They found no guns or ammunition in any of the places, for there was none. And to satisfy their Blood thirsty appetites would kill unoffending negro men on their way to or from dinner. Some of our most worthy negro men have been made to leave the city. Also some whites, G. Z. French, Deputy Sheriff, Chief of Police Jno R. Melton, Dr. S. P. Wright Mayor and R. H. Bunting United States Comissioner (sic). We dont know where Mr. Chadbourn the Post Master is, and two or three others whites. I call on you the head of the American nation to help these humble subjects. We are loyal we go when duty calls us. And are we to die like rats in a trap? with no place to seek redress or to go with our Grievances? Can we call on any other nation for help? Why do you forsake the negro? who is not to blame for being here. This Grand and noble nation who flies to the help of suffering humanity of another nation? and leave the Secessionists and born Rioters to slay us. . . . When our parents belonged to them, why, the negro was all right now, when they work and accumulate property they are all wrong. The negroes that have been banished are all property owners to considerable extent, had they been worthless negroes, we would not care.

Will you for God sake in your next message to Congress give us some relief. If you send us all to Africa we will be willing or a number of us will gladly go. Is this the land of the free and the home of the brave? How can the negro sing my country tis of thee? . . . There seems to be no help for us. No paper will tell the truth about the negro. The men of the 1st North Carolina were home on a furlough and they took a high hand in the nefarious work, also, the companies from every little town came in to kill the negro. There was not any rioting simply the strong slaying the weak. They speak of special police every white man and boy from 12 years up had a gun or pistol, and the negro had nothing, his soul he could not say was his own. Oh, to see how we are Slaughtered, when our husbands go to work we do not look for their return. The man who promises the negro protection now as Mayor is the one who in his speech at the Opera house said the Cape Fear should be strewn with carcasses. Some papers I see, say it was right to eject the Negro editor. That is all right but why should a whole city full of negroes suffer for Manly when he was hundreds of miles away? And the paper had ceased publication. We were glad it was so for our own safety. But they tried to slay us all. To day we are mourners in a strange land with no protection near. God help us. Do something to alleviate our sorrows, if you please. I cannot sign my name and live. But every word of this is true. The law of our state is no good for the negro anyhow. yours in much distress

Wilmington, N.C.

Nov. 15, 1898

Mr. McKinly (sic)

Dear sir, the poor citens of the colored people of north carolina are suffering. there is over four hundred women and children are driven from their home far out into the woods by the dimocrate party. Look out for a letter from Wilmington North Carolina and in that letter that it will be the names of the citens but that letter is not true and if you have ever help the colored people, for God sake help them now that old confradate flage is floating in Wilmington North Carolina. The city of Wilmington is unde the confradate laws, we are over powed with the rapid fire of the guns, and they had cannons, in wagons, and they set fire to almost half of the City. I would give you my name but I am afraid. I am afraid to own my name. it is from a colored citens

San Antonio Tex. (c. 1899)

Dear Mr. President McKinley . . . Will you think once of the barbous act of the *white people* in the south to the poor helpless colored people. Dear President think of the burning of one Sam Hose in Georgia and numbers of other Lynching since that occured (sic). and think of the 7 negroes strung to a limb near Eagle pass on the 20 of May.

Dear President will you as a honest President attend to this Lynch law of the south. . . . I labored hard for you when you was a candidate and I will do the same thing over again. . . . We as colored people are with out protection here it Seam that we are the off cast race of the earth and yet we are law abiding citizens But the

brutish whites of the south seem to take the law in their own hands. . . . Dear President I hope I'm not out of my place for writing this letter for I mean no harm in this world I hope you will give this due consideration for we are anxious to have equal rights as American citizen we dont ask for no more than this consistution demand us to have. And will you see to it that we have it. . . . We have a man in Jail now who was claimed to commit a crime on a Mrs Wilkins and she stated that the negro was a mulatto who committed the act and now the (sic) have a supected one and he is as black as ink and she says he is the one. he does not answer to the first description she gave but just seeked up any just so he is a negro and execute him. . . . Dear President I hope you will see to it that those excuters of Sam Hose will be brought to trial ex Gov. Atkinson know some of them and they all can be eaisly caught.

P.S. Dear President I often think of when you was a Gov of Ohio when a negro was going to be Lynch and you got in a special car and went to his rescue and save him from that horrible act they was preparing for him. and I never will forget such a worthy man as you I'm with you both heart and hand and shall always be for you as long as you are a McKinley. . . .

Please let me hear from you at once. . . . I hope you will work this Lynch law of the south as successfully as you have work the war situation. . . . please urge this matter on.

San Antonio, Texas  
Law abiding citizen  
W. G. Banks, 650 Soledad st.

Brunswick Ga  
July 12 ad 1900

Mr. McKenley (sic)

Dear President it affoards me With much Pleashure to right you to investigate a matter for ous. We are Knights of Pythas of Brunswick Lodge No. 17 Phthagoras We have had a Worthy Brother K of P By the name of Abe Sebens Lynched By a crowd of White men at nahanta. ga. 2 Weeks a go & L. Keleogg. C.C. & G. Johnson Vice. C. Went up there Last Sunday to investigate the matters & they own Lynching him & it Was all that they could do to get away from there alive them selves Withe out Beaing Killed & it was told to them While Beaing there that they had a Pond over there in the Woods that they called scull Pond & Person could not hardly get through there for the dead Peoples Borne What they had killed & throwed in there & the White mens of Nahanta. Ga told us to hour face god dam you as many negroes as We have Killed here you arr the first to that Ever came here to investigate a matter god dam your cheeky Sales get away from heare Before some one Will have to come to see about you & did drilled ous away Like We Was dogs & would not Let ous go in the woods & get the Body so i take Pleashure in righting to you to investigate this matter for me Please oblige ous & come to our Rescue Just as soon as Possible . . .

Pythagoras. Lodge. No. 17.  
L. Keleogg. C.C.  
G. Johnson. Vice. C.  
Brunswick. Ga.