

Primary Source - Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt and Reply (1938)

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*Greensboro N.C.
February 12, 1938*

*Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Washington D.C.*

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt

On January 1st I was layed off from my work leaving my father the whole support of our family. Just recently he was cut down to three days a week with a cut in salary. With seven of us in the family it is just about impossible for us to live on this amount.

My mother has been sick for over two months having had a nervous breakdown and we are unable to buy or furnish her with the medicine required for her recovery.

I am 18 years of age the oldest girl in the family, and it just seems impossible for me to get a job any where. I have been to Mills, Stores and Firms of all sorts. I am willing and able to work. Can furnish excellent references but at this time of the year it just seems impossible to find work.

We are so in debt and each week the bills are piling higher and higher that it just seems as if there was no way out. We must make a payment on our furniture bill. And if it isn't paid soon they will be out any day for our furniture. And on top of this we are behind in our rent.

It would be a big help if we could get some of our bills paid as they are already impatient for their money. If you could help us out with from \$35.00 to \$50.00 I believe we would be the happiest family in the world. We have a good respectable family, none of us have ever been in any trouble, and our characters are above reproach. Just as soon as I get back to work and the family on their feet again I will pay you back as much a week as possible until your kind favor has been fully repaid.

My father's work has been very poor for the past year. He is an advertising salesman, and his work right now is practically nothing; and as he has had kidney trouble for some time, taking more than he could make, for medicine. He has been improving recently, since he had his teeth extracted, and is looking forward to a job but which will not be available for a month or more. We went through the depression without asking for relief. I registered January 14th for unemployment compensation, and although promised \$6.25 a week, have not received a cent as yet.

Won't you please grant me the aforementioned favor, please make it a personal favor, Mrs. Roosevelt, for if you would refer it to a local agency, I would suffer untold delay and embarrassment. Although we are poor, we try to hold off embarrassment, you know it is "hard to be broke, and harder to admit it."

Please grant me this favor and I will ever be

Gratefully Yours,
D.B.

This is not intended for publication

Reply to the Letter:

February 15, 1938

My dear Miss B.:

Mrs. Roosevelt has asked me to acknowledge your letter which she read with sympathy. She is indeed sorry to know of your difficult situation, but regrets that she unable to lend you the money needed. The number of demands on her resources make it impossible for her to respond to the many requests for loans, much as she would like to do so.

Mrs. Roosevelt suggests that you get in touch with the National Youth Administration, and the United States Employment Service Department of Labor, as these agencies may be able to assist you in finding employment.

Very sincerely yours.
Secretary to
Mrs. Roosevelt