"Dear Mr. President", New York, New York, January or February 1942

AFS 6408A

[Talking blues song by Peter Bowers (Pete Seeger)]

Dear Mr. President, I set me down, and send you greetings from New York town. Send you the best wishes from all the friends I know in both the AF of L and the CIO, and unaffiliated. My brother, he's a member of a shoplifter's union.

I'm an ordinary guy, worked most of my life. Someday I'll settle down with my kids and wife. I like to see a movie, or take a little drink, and I like being free to say what I think. It sort of runs in the family. My grandfather crossed the ocean for the same reasons.

Now I hate Hitler, and I can tell you why - he's caused a lot of good people to suffer and die. He's got a way of shoving folks around, and I figure it's about time we slapped him down. Give him a dose of his own medicine - lead poison.

Now Mr. President, we haven't always agreed in the past, I know, but that isn't at all important now. What is important is what we've got to do. We've got to beat Hitler, and until we do, other things can wait. You've got to kill the wild beast before you can cultivate your garden.

Now as I think of our great land - its cities, its towns, its farming lands, with millions of good people workin' every day - I know it ain't perfect, but it will be someday. Just give us a little time.

This is the reason that I want to fight, not because everything's perfect or everything's right. No, it's just the opposite. I'm fighting because I want a better America and better laws, better homes, and jobs and schools, and no more Jim Crow and no more rules like “You can't ride in this train 'cause you're a Negro.” “You can't live here, 'cause you're a Jew.” “You can't work here 'cause you believe in unions, young man.”

I'm a white man and there's blonde hairs on my head, but I keep thinking of what Joe Louis once said. He said, “There's a lot of things wrong, but Hitler won't help them.”

Dear Mr. President, you're commander in chief of our armed forces - the ships, the planes, the tanks, the horses - and I guess you know best just where I can fight. I want to be just situated right to do the most damage.
I never was one to try to shirk and let the other fellas do all the work. So when the time comes, I'll be on hand, and I guess I can make good use of my two hands. Quit playing this banjo around with the boys, and exchange it for something that makes more noise.

Dear Mr. President, we got just one big job to do, and that's lick Hitler, and when we're through, let no one else like him ever take his place to trample down the human race. So if need be, I want you to give me a gun, so we can hurry up and get the job done.