

Scottsboro Mothers, Still Uncowed In Struggle, Fight for Their Boys

The story of the toilworn lives of the five mothers of the Scottsboro boys who are now in New York, and who will go to Washington on Mothers' Day, May 13, to demand of the president that their innocent boys, for three years in the shadow of the electric chair, be freed, is continued today in the interview by Otto Hall, below.

A mass send-off for the Scottsboro mothers will be held under the auspices of the International Labor Defense in St. Nicholas Arena, Friday night, May 11.

By OTTO HALL

Mother Powell was born in Maarta, Ga., and was one of a family of ten. Her family, also, were sharecroppers, and she has worked ever since she was old enough to remember. When she was a very little girl, hardly big enough to put her hand on top of a table, she was sent to the "big house" to help in the kitchen. She was so small she had to stand on a box to wipe dishes and iron clothes. A few years later, she was sent to the fields because there were other little children to take her place in the kitchen. At fourteen she plowed with two mules. This was a plenty big enough job for a full grown man.

She was married at the age of 13 to a sharecropper on the same plantation. She had "graduated" into a life time school of misery and hard labor. She is the mother of seven children, and is a widow.

Her boy Ozie was only 14 years old when he was arrested. Like the others he had gone away to get work. He had to help take care of his mother and older sister, who was sick. As a result of the hard work she had to do as a child, Mother Powell's health has always been poor.

All Are Fighters

I listened to these mothers tell their story and could feel with them a burning indignation against a vicious system that make beasts of burden out of human beings. These mothers are all fighters. Suffering, oppression and living in one of the champion lynch states in the country has not cowed them in the least.

Mother Patterson, whose son has been condemned to die three times by the lynch courts, said, "I get so filled up when I think about my boy I can hardly hold myself. My

health ain't been very good, but I'm going to work in the I. L. D. till the last breath leaves my body. I'm going to make it so that other colored mothers won't have to go through what I went through."

Mother Patterson was born in Elberton, Ga. She also comes from a family of sharecroppers. Her mother died when she was about seven years old, and she went to work in the fields at that age. She married when she was about 18, she thinks, and is the mother of 11 children. Only six of them are living today. She has gone through a lifetime of miserable toil. Often she worked in the fields while carrying her children up to the day they were born. Her husband, Claude Patterson, is like her, an active fighter in the I. L. D. He has a reputation in his community of being absolutely fearless and is known by the "good" white folk as a "bigcity nigger."

"My husband, Claude, never did take no foolishness off'n white folks," she told me, proudly, "and Haywood is just like his pa. Ain't afraid of nothing or nobody." She told of the time her husband tried to kill his planter boss, who attempted to cheat him out of his cotton. When the "law" tried to organize a mob to "put this Negro in his place" the planter, fearful of losing a valuable "hand" told the mob not to interfere between him and his "niggers" because he was able to handle his "niggers" himself.

Patterson was determined to send his children to school and when the planter objected, he moved away with his family to Chattanooga. He told his friends that he was through with ploughing cotton and that even if he only earned a couple of dollars a week in the city he would at least be able to see cash.

In 1931, the year his boy was arrested, he was only making four days a week on his job, and the combined earnings of the whole family was scarcely enough to feed them. Haywood Patterson quit school to go to work because, he told his mother, that he was tired of going to school in overalls.

He said, "I'm big enough to help you and pa out now and I'm going up North where I can make more money." He said, "Put some starch in my overalls Ma, so that I can look clean when I get there."

"That's the last I saw of my boy,"

said Mother Patterson, "til I saw him in jail."

All of these mothers, in spite of years of toil and bringing many children into the world, are fine looking women. These are working class women and a comparison between them and triple-chinned-poodle-dog-following women of the parasite class show the ones who are to survive and who are capable of making the world a fit place in which to live.

Mother Williams, the youngest of the Scottsboro mothers, is only 34 years old and looks even younger. She was born in Atlanta, Ga., and was brought to Chattanooga by her parents when a baby. She went to work at the age of 11, quitting school before finishing the third grade. She married at 14, and is the mother of 10 children, seven of whom are living. Her husband died when she was still carrying her youngest baby.

Her boy, Eugene, was only 13 when he was arrested at Scottsboro, charged with rape. When he left, he told his mother he was going to Pittsburgh where his uncle lived, and that he would soon get work and send her money.

These mothers, in spite of the fact that they have had very little formal education, have plenty of native intelligence. A talk with them blasts the vicious lie spread by Pickens and Walter White of the N.A.A.C.P. that these mothers were ignorant and did not try to bring their children up properly.

According to Du Bois, Schuyler, White, Pickens, Robert Vann of the "Pittsburgh Courier," and others, these mothers are "ignorant and depraved" because they had too much sense to trust the fate of their boys to these agents of the lynchers. Even today, the leaders of the N.A.A.C.P. are conniving with the Southern lynchers to try to force the boys through torture to repudiate the I.L.D. and let them handle their case. Protests by the thousands must go to Deputy Warden Dan Rogers of Jefferson County Jail in Birmingham, Governor Miller, President Roosevelt to stop the torture of these boys.

Workers and those sympathetic should know that the families of these mothers can use children's clothes and shoes if these are sent to the District I.L.D. office, 870 Broadway.