

Roanoke Island, September 29, 1864

Mr. C.C. Leigh.

Dear Sir:—Knowing that abler pens and more eloquent tongues than mine are pleading the cause of the freedmen at the North, has caused me to keep silent for the last two months. But as I am aware that your Association has no other laborer in this field but myself, I have resolved once more to intrude upon your notice by reporting our condition present, and prospective wants.

I hope by so doing I shall not express so much of anxiety that it shall seem like impatience. The last month has been to me a very trying one, the most so of any since I have been in the work, and for this, among other reasons, that during the whole month I have received no supplies for the wants of the people, and have been compelled to seem those wants daily increasing; and now, as the sickly season is upon us, I am empty-handed.

I have hoped for supplies from Newbern, but Mr. James was here last week and told me they had none there to spare, but hoped daily to receive some. To-day the boat has again arrived without goods for us, and brings also the sad intelligence that, on account of the fearful prevalence of yellow fever, they do not even distribute the mail, and we now seem to be shut out from all hope of speedy supply. I can not now even encourage the people to hope for speedy relief; all I can do is to encourage them to hope in God.

While urging one poor woman (who has *five* children, two of whom are nearly helpless, from former exposure,) to do so this morning, she burst into tears, and exclaimed: "Honey, I is trusted and prayed since I was here to see you, and it seems like as God would never hear me, but dat my poor children must freeze this winter any way."

My own faith was too weak and my heart too full to say more to her, and daily, even hourly, is my heart pained by similar tales of want, and fear for the approaching cold weather. The goods which we most need are for women and children.

I know not what is being done or what is the wants of other fields, as I see no papers, therefore I can only plead our own wants--the *wants of three thousand* suffering, and doomed to suffer still more deeply, unless speedily relieved. Many are dying in consequence of suffering from last winter's cold and exposure; and there are many more who must die unless protected against the cold rains of autumn, which will soon be here.

The engineer of the mill called yesterday to know if some means could not be devised to obtain a supply of shoes. He says that many of the men are obliged to work in water, and unless they can have dry warm shoes to put on when they are through, they get sick directly. Most of the women are barefooted, and are obliged to go out for wood; many of them cut and "tote" it home from a great distance. Boys and girls will also want shoes and stockings, without which they must be kept from school. Oh, that some philanthropist from the North would come down and survey this field, and our wants, that I should not be obliged to write them.

Will not some of the benevolent at the North help us?

I will again venture to allude to the wants for our five hundred orphans. I know not how to provide for even one of them. Our little *Jimmy* already begins to hover around our kitchen

fire on a cool morning, and as I see him I wonder if they all have an opportunity to put their little toes in a warm place. Oh! that I could shelter them all.

Yours truly,

Sarah P. Freeman

[“A Letter To be Read and Circulated, in Public and Private Meeting, in aid of the Freedmen,”
The Freedmen's Advocate 1 (November 1864): 38.]