



Clarence Norris

State Board of Pardons and Paroles

Montgomery, Alabama

CERTIFICATE OF PARDON WITH RESTORATION OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

It having been made to appear to the Alabama State Board of Pardons and Paroles that

Clarence Norris CM #39745

was convicted in Morgan County on July 5, 19 38

of Rape, was sentenced to a term of Life ~~years~~ XXXXX

and was released on parole on September 26, 19 46, and the maximum term of sentence has not yet expired,

NOW, In compliance with the authority vested in the State Board of Pardons and Paroles by the Constitution and the Laws of the State of Alabama to grant pardons and to restore civil and political rights, it is

ORDERED that a pardon be granted to the above named as a result of the above stated conviction, and all prior disqualifying convictions, and it is further ordered that all civil and political rights which were lost as a result of the conviction be and they are hereby restored.

GIVEN UNDER THE HAND AND SEAL of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles,

this the 29th day of November, 19 76



STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

By Norman F. Ussery
Chairman

STATE OF ALABAMA
BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

BOARD ACTION ON PARDON AND/OR RESTORATION

Name Norris, Clarence County Morgan Number 39745

- ☒ CASE IN WHICH MAXIMUM SENTENCE HAS NOT EXPIRED
☐ CASE IN WHICH MAXIMUM SENTENCE HAS EXPIRED
☐ FEDERAL CONVICTION

In compliance with all provisions of Title 42, Code of Alabama, 1940, as amended, application as shown above, is GRANTED:

Application DENIED:

STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

BY

Norman F. Kessner
William R. Robinson
Leta Cousin Sellers

BY

CERTIFICATE ISSUED 11-26-76

Denial Notice Issued _____

BY

pn

BY

APPLICANT'S ATTORNEY AND ADDRESS: _____

CONCURRED IN AND APPROVED BY

George C Wallace
GEORGE C WALLACE
GOVERNOR

COF-511

10-25-76 J42

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE, REASONS AND OPINION
OF SARA COUSINS SELLERS, ASSOCIATE MEMBER
BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

In Re: Application for a Pardon
Clarence Norris #39,745

Clarence Norris was convicted of Rape on July 21, 1937, and was sentenced to Death. The sentence was commuted to Life on July 5, 1938. He now comes before the Board through his attorneys, Mr. James I. Meyerson and Mr. Donald Watkins and petitions this Board for a Pardon.

The defendant, Clarence Norris, was the only one of those who were charged who was sentenced to Death. He is now classified as the sole surviving member of this group of defendants and he is now 64 years of age. This crime for which he was actually convicted was committed on March 25, 1931, which was 45 years ago.

This crime was committed on March 25, 1931. After four trials the defendant was found guilty and sentenced to Death. Although no lynching took place the attitude and atmosphere of the community at Paint Rock, Alabama, at the time the train pulled into the station where a mob had gathered and was waiting for the nine defendants, was such that if precautionary measures had not been taken the defendant may very well have been lynched. It was my understanding it was necessary to call out the State National Guard or Militia to keep peace and protect the defendants. It appears from the accounts of this trial that this atmosphere and attitude proceeded on throughout the trials. It is my opinion from having studied history of the South that the jurors in this case, even though they were outstanding citizens, were not free to vote their actual convictions. It would appear that pressure was placed on the jurors by their peers to find the defendants guilty. This is understandable since these people were residents of that part of the country and had to return to their jobs and homes after the trials ended.

After reviewing the physical evidence presented in this trial there is some question in my mind as to whether or not a rape was actually committed. One victim testified that she had been hit in the head with a pistol which caused her head to bleed and that a knife had been held to her throat, that six defendants raped her, that she was lying on top of jagged rock for almost an hour while having sexual intercourse with the six defendants and that the last act was committed just five minutes prior to reaching Paint Rock, Alabama, where the train was stopped and she and the other defendants were taken off.

She was then taken to the offices of Dr. Bridges and Dr. Lynch who made an examination of her person. The examination took place about one and one-half hours after the rape. Dr. Bridges testified that he did not sew up a wound on the girl's head, nor did he see any blood on her scalp or notice any evidence of any blow to the head. He did not recall that a claim had been made that she had been hit in the head at the time of his examination.

Honorable William J. Baxley, Attorney General for the State of Alabama, has filed a report with the State Board of Pardons and Paroles dated August 5, 1976, which states that he has investigated this case and that he has evidence that the defendant was not guilty. Mr. Baxley's report is being made a part of this record and reasons.

The Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles has received evidence that Clarence Norris is now living in the State of New York, has not been arrested since he fled the State in 1946, has raised a family, is satisfactorily employed and has otherwise become a useful citizen. He has received a recommendation for a Pardon from many outstanding citizens throughout this country, as well as the State of New York.

After careful consideration in this case, it is my opinion that although Clarence Norris was guilty in the eyes of the jurors that convicted him, and after taking into consideration the passing of time, the changes in attitudes and the atmosphere of the citizens of this country which definitely affects the application of the law, it is now my opinion that Clarence Norris is not guilty of this offense. Therefore, it is my considered judgment that he be granted a Pardon with complete restoration of his civil and political rights.

Signed and dated at Montgomery, Alabama, this the 25th day of October, 1976.

Sara Cousins Sellers
Sara Cousins Sellers
Associate Member

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF ALABAMA • MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130



WILLIAM J. BAXLEY
ATTORNEY GENERAL

GEORGE L. BECK
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

E. RAY ACTON
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

WALTER S. TURNER
CHIEF ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL

LUCY M. RICHARDS
CONFIDENTIAL ASSISTANT

JACK D. SHOWS
CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

October 25, 1976

Board of Pardons and Paroles
State of Alabama
654 Administrative Building
Montgomery, Alabama, 36130

Dear Members of the Board:

In my August 5, 1976 letter to you, I briefly chronicled the case of Clarence Norris, a defendant in the case commonly known as the "Scottsboro Case". I stated at that time my belief based on the facts of the case, that Clarence Norris was and is innocent of the crime for which he stands convicted.

Clarence Norris was tried on three separate occasions on the charge of rape. At each trial the evidence and testimony of the witnesses were substantially the same, with the significant exception that one of the alleged rape victims, Ruby Bates, retracted her testimony after the first trial, admitted she had perjured herself and that there was no rape.

Victoria Price, the remaining prosecutrix, testified at the last trial of Clarence Norris that she was raped by Clarence Norris and the eight other defendants. Pertinent excerpts of her testimony are as follows:

- Price stated she was brutally raped on a railroad freight car containing chert, a rocky, pebble like substance.
- The attack was violent in that she was struck on the head with the butt of a pistol causing bleeding.

- Each attacker, over eight in number, sexually penetrated her and ejaculated causing semen to be present not only in and on her genitals but also on her clothing.

- The attackers beat her severely about the head and face, bruising and scratching her extensively throughout her body causing pronounced swelling of her nose, lips, ankles and bleeding.

- Price testified that the mass rape resulted in bleeding from the vagina.

The time lap between the alleged rape and the examination of Victoria Price by Dr. Bridges and Dr. Lynch was within approximately two hours of the alleged rape according to the record. The testimony of Dr. Bridges, the physician who examined Victoria Price, revealed the following pertinent facts.

- Dr. Bridges testified that he did not find any wound on the head of Victoria Price which might conceivably have been caused by a blow of a weapon.

- Dr. Bridges saw no blood on her scalp nor did Price complain of any head injury or blood on the scalp.

- Dr. Bridges states he found only some small scratches on the wrist and back of Price. There were no lacerations or bleeding as claimed by Price.

- From testimony it appears that Victoria Price had been traveling, prior to the alleged incident, on freight trains and living in camps among the hobos.

- The physicians during their examination did not find any signs of fresh semen on Victoria Price's genital organs nor on her clothing as she claims.

- Whatever substance was found resembling semen was present on Price's body long before the alleged rape by Clarence Norris, according to the testimony of Dr. Bridges.

- Testimony revealed that Victoria Price had engaged in sexual intercourse sometime prior to boarding the train containing Clarence Norris and his companions.

- Dr. Bridges' examination confirmed that there was no blood being emitted from Price's vagina as she claimed nor did her genitals appear bruised or ripped as Price claimed.

- The doctor observed the physical appearance and demeanor of Victoria Price during her physical examination and Dr. Bridges testified that Price was neither hysterical nor appeared nervous. The doctor noted that her respiration and pulse were normal, a state incompatible with a rape victim.

It appears clearly from the physical examination of Victoria Price that there was no evidence of a brutal, massive rape and that the statements made by Victoria Price in regard to Clarence Norris are totally unworthy of belief.

As observed by Judge Horton in his opinion on the evidence, the same evidence and testimony presented at the trial which convicted Clarence Norris, the law mandates that a person not be convicted of rape absent corroboration, particularly where the testimony of the prosecutrix bears as in this case blatant conflicts and lacks any support from scientific evidence. Based on the scientific evaluation of the physician who examined Victoria Price, it is impossible that she was raped as she alleged.

For the reasons stated above, I again vigorously appeal to this board to review all the evidence in this case and swiftly grant to Clarence Norris a full and complete pardon. Mr. Norris will continue to live a nightmare until this board removes from him the unjust stigma of conviction for a crime which the overwhelming evidence clearly shows he did not commit.

Sincerely,

BILL BAXLEY
Attorney General
By-

BB/sa

MILTON C. DAVIS
Assistant Attorney General



STATE OF ALABAMA
BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

October 22, 1976



NORMAN F. USSERY
Chairman of the Board

WILLIAM R. ROBINSON
Member of the Board

SARA COUSINS SELLERS
Member of the Board

DAVID H. WILLIAMS
Executive Director

Mr. Clarence Norris #39,745
2676 Linden Boulevard
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Norris:

On this date Board Members Mrs. Sara Cousins Sellers and William R. Robinson voted to void the delinquency taken in your case on September 30, 1976, and reinstate you on parole but without supervision. We have further ordered that you be granted a Conditional Release from supervision.

This action was taken based on information from the State of New York that you have lived there for the past 30 years, have worked regularly and have now become a useful citizen. We feel that in view of this it would not be necessary to place you under supervision at this time.

Sincerely yours,


William R. Robinson
Member of the Board

WRR/d1





STATE OF ALABAMA
BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

October 22, 1976



NORMAN F. USSERY
Chairman of the Board
WILLIAM R. ROBINSON
Member of the Board
SARA COUSINS SELLERS
Member of the Board

DAVID H. WILLIAMS
Executive Director

Mr. A. V. Ryer
Identification Officer
Route 5, Box 125
Montgomery, Alabama 36109

In Re: Clarence Norris
#39,745

Dear Mr. Ryer:

On September 30, 1946 the above named subject was declared delinquent. The Board has this date ordered that the delinquency be voided, the warrant for his arrest be withdrawn.

Please mark your records to show the same action.

Sincerely yours,

David H. Williams
Executive Director

DHW/d1

cc: Decatur Office - Please mark your file to show the same action.



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October 15, 1976

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Mr. Norman F. Ussery
Chairman
Alabama State Board of Pardons
and Paroles
Montgomery, Alabama 36103

RE: The Matter of the Application of Clarence Norris

Dear Mr. Ussery:

Please be advised that I am in receipt of your letter of October 13, 1976 respecting our meeting in reference to the above-mentioned matter. I am truly hopeful that in the very near future we will be able to work out an agreement whereby Mr. Clarence Norris, believed to be the last living Scottsboro defendant, will secure and receive a full and complete pardon (with the restoration of all of his civil and political rights) from the State of Alabama; and that, in receiving and securing the same, he will not have to endure unnecessary burden and humiliation

He, as well as the State of Alabama, have suffered enough as a consequence of this tragic episode in our history.

I am enclosing herein the original and three copies of the formal pardon application which Mr. Norris filled out with my assistance and appropriately signed.

It was our understanding, originally, that you had accepted the letter of Donald Watkins, Esq., of Montgomery, Alabama, (dated August 11, 1976) as a formal application for a pardon, on behalf of Mr. Norris. It is my understanding, as well, that the enclosed application is merely a formality and that its filing at this time will not delay the efforts being undertaken in this matter.

With respect to the references, you are presently in receipt of letters of support from the named individuals; and I expect that further letters in this regard will be forthcoming shortly.

Mr. Norman F. Ussery
Chairman
Alabama State Board of Pardons
and Paroles
Page two (2) cont.
October 15, 1976

With respect to Mr. Norris's employment record, we will be able to provide you with further information if you deem such necessary. Between his latest position with the City of New York and his position with Mars Metal in Ridgefield, New Jersey, Mr. Norris was unemployed for a period of time and received unemployment compensation.

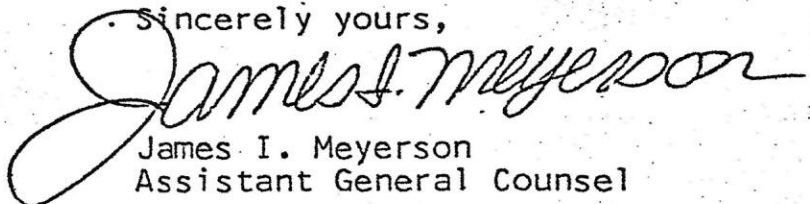
While Mr. Norris was originally sentenced to death, his sentence was commuted to a prison term for his natural life.

It is our considered opinion that the overwhelming weight of the evidence clearly establishes the innocence of all of the Scottsboro defendants, including the applicant herein; and that the interest of justice requires that the Board act affirmatively and with dispatch in granting to Mr. Clarence Norris a full and complete pardon, without condition attached thereto.

I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Thank you for your immediate attention and consideration herein.

Sincerely yours,



James I. Meyerson
Assistant General Counsel

JIM/

attachments

copies (with attachments): Mr. Clarence Norris
Donald Watkins, Esq.

STATE OF ALABAMA
BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES
Montgomery, Alabama

APPLICATION FOR PARDON AND/OR RESTORATION OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Name Clarence Norris
Address 2676 Linden Blvd. Phone none
Street City State
County of Conviction Morgan Date of Conviction July 16, 1937
Check the court of conviction — State _____ City _____ Federal _____
Offense Rape Sentence Death Prison KILBY Probation _____
(Term)
Plea: Guilty _____ Not Guilty _____ Nolo Contendere _____
Date and Method of Release Parole

Race _____
Sex Male
Age 64
Prison No. _____

Date of Final Discharge _____ Date Last Voted _____
EMPLOYMENT HISTORY SINCE RELEASE (List in Chronological Order)
Name of Employer Address Dates
1. City of New York From approx. 19 72
To date 19 _____
2. Mars Metal Ridgefield, New Jersey From about two years 19 _____
To 19 _____
3. Plastics Co. 48 East 20th Street New York City From almost three 19 _____
To years 19 _____

REFERENCES:
Name Address
Roy Wilkens _____
Name Address
Mayor Abraham Beame _____
Name Address
Senator Jacob Javits _____
Name Address
Percy Sutton, Borough President _____
(List other references on back of application)

Reason for Application See below
State other facts showing why restoration should be granted. (Participation in Civic, Church, Political, Family Life, Etc.)

I am seeking this application because I am innocent
of the crime of which I was charged and convicted; and
the overwhelming weight of the evidence clearly establishes
my innocence as well as the innocence of the others with whom I
was tried.

Date October 14, 1976

Signature Clarence Norris

Note: Application must be filed in duplicate.
co: 510

STATE OF ALABAMA
BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

September 16, 1976

NORMAN F. USSERY
Chairman of the Board

WILLIAM R. ROBINSON
Member of the Board

SARA COUSINS SELLERS
Member of the Board

DAVID H. WILLIAMS
Executive Director

Honorable Milton C. Davis
Assistant Attorney General
State of Alabama
Administrative Building
Montgomery, Alabama

In Re: Clarence Norris
#39,745

Dear Mr. Davis:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of September 10, 1976, concerning the above named subject.

It is my feeling that as long as Mr. Norris is a fugitive from justice and there is an outstanding warrant against him it would not be proper even to consider him for a pardon at this time.

Sincerely yours,

Norman F. Ussery
Norman F. Ussery
Chairman

NFU/d1





STATE OF ALABAMA
BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

August 31, 1976



NORMAN F. USSERY
Chairman of the Board
WILLIAM R. ROBINSON
Member of the Board
SARA COUSINS SELLERS
Member of the Board

DAVID H. WILLIAMS
Executive Director

Honorable Donald V. Watkins
Gray, Seay and Langford
Attorneys and Counsellors
352 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

In Re: Clarence Norris
#39,745

Dear Mr. Watkins:

Thank you for your letter of August 11, 1976, re-
garding Clarence Norris.

Mr. Norris was paroled by the Board of Pardons and
Paroles on September 26, 1946. A few days later,
September 30th, he was declared delinquent and
charged with "failure to report place of residence;
left state without permission."

I checked with the Board of Corrections this date
and the warrant for this person's arrest is still
outstanding.

Sincerely yours,

Norman F. Ussery
Norman F. Ussery
Chairman

NFU/d1



August 11, 1976

Board of Pardons & Paroles
State of Alabama
Administrative Building
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

RE: Clarence Norris, alias Willie Norris

Dear Members of the Board:

Our law firm represents Mr. Clarence Norris, who is also known as Mr. Willie Norris. Clarence Norris was an original "Scottsboro Boy."

On March 25, 1931, Clarence Norris (along with eight other young black boys) was arrested and charged with the rape of two white women who were riding a freight train through Northeast Alabama. In April, 1931, all of the Scottsboro boys were tried, convicted and sentenced to death with the exception of Roy Wright in whose case the jury disagreed. Appeals from this verdict resulted in the Supreme Court of the United States reversing the convictions of Norris and the other defendants and a new trial was ordered.

In November, 1933, Clarence Norris was tried again for the rape of the two white females. The jury returned a verdict of guilty and sentenced Mr. Norris to death despite the retraction of Miss Ruby Bates's previous testimony during the first trial that Mr. Norris was one of the boys who had raped her. Judge James E. Horton, before whom the trial took place, reversed the jury by granting a new trial to the defendants.

In July, 1937, Clarence Norris was tried for the third time for the same offense. Again, he was sentenced to death by an all white jury. The death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1938 by Order of Governor Bibb Graves.

In 1944, Clarence Norris was released on parole. During that year his parole was revoked and it was not until 1946 that Clarence Norris was paroled again and during that same year, his parole was declared delinquent.

8/11/76

Page 2

As attorneys for Mr. Norris, we are hereby respectfully applying for a full and complete pardon for Clarence Norris. We are enclosing with this letter of application a calendar of the Scottsboro case together with Judge Horton's decision in the Scottsboro case. As Judge Horton's lengthy opinion points out, there was absolutely no evidence to prove that Clarence Norris or any of the other defendants raped the women. The medical examination of the women conducted a short time after the alleged rape were negative. There was no indication of any rape. One of the alleged victims repudiated her testimony and admitted that she had lied under oath in the former trials. The two alleged victims, themselves illegally traveling as hobos on the freight train, in fear of punishment fabricated the story of being raped to protect themselves.

Mr. Norris is the last known surviving member of the Scottsboro defendants. He is now 64 years old and has a wife and two teenage girls. He resides in New York State.

Mr. Norris served approximately five of his 15 years in prison on death row. He is presently employed by a municipal government as a machine operator in a city warehouse. Since he left Alabama in 1946, Mr. Norris has held several positions all of which might be conveniently categorized as laborer jobs.

Mr. Norris has not been convicted of any serious offense since he has been residing in New York. He has been a cooperative law abiding citizen of New York and a faithful husband and father.

We hope that the Board give Mr. Norris's application for full and complete pardon all due consideration together with the documents enclosed to support this application. If further information is needed concerning Mr. Norris's application, do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

GRAY, SEAY & LANGFORD

DONALD V. WATKINS

DVW:ah

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF ALABAMA · MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130



WILLIAM J. BAXLEY
ATTORNEY GENERAL

August 5, 1976

GEORGE L. BECK
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

E. RAY ACTON
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

WALTER S. TURNER
CHIEF ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL

LUCY M. RICHARDS
CONFIDENTIAL ASSISTANT

JACK D. SHOWS
CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

Board of Pardons and Paroles
State of Alabama
654 Administrative Building
Montgomery, Alabama, 36130

Dear Members of the Board:

Several months ago this office was asked to review the case of Clarence Norris known also as Willie Norris. Clarence Norris was a defendant in the case commonly called the "Scottsboro Case". In 1931 Clarence Norris along with eight other young black boys was charged with the rape of two white women who were riding a freight train as hobos. The subsequent trials and appeals through the courts of Alabama and to the U. S. Supreme Court resulted in this case becoming one of the most publicized in American jurisprudence.

The chronicle of events occurring after Clarence Norris' arrest may be summarized as follows:

1. On March 25, 1931 Clarence Norris, age 19, was arrested. During that time the climate in the community was so inflamed and threatening to the safety of the defendants that the state militia was called to protect them. The jury returned a verdict of guilty and gave all the defendants the death penalty.

2. Appeals from this verdict resulted in the Supreme Court of the United States reversing the convictions of Clarence Norris and the other defendants and a new trial was ordered.

3. In 1933 a new trial was had whereat Ruby Bates, one of the white women alleged to have been raped, reversed her testimony and denied that Clarence Norris or the other defendants committed rape on her or her companion Victoria Price. The jury

however, in the face of this retraction, again returned a verdict of guilty and set the punishment at death. Judge James E. Horton, before whom the trials took place, reversed the jury by granting a new trial to the defendants.

4. Judge Horton in a lengthy opinion found there was absolutely no evidence to prove that Clarence Norris or the other defendants raped the women. The medical examinations of the women conducted a short time after the alleged rapes were negative. There was no indication of any rape. One alleged victim repudiated her testimony and admitted she had lied under oath in the former trials. The two alleged victims, themselves illegally traveling as hobos on the freight train and fearing punishment, fabricated the story of being raped in order not to be prosecuted.

5. The defendants were tried a third time ending with the jury again imposing the death penalty. The U. S. Supreme Court reviewing the case on appeal again reversed the convictions on the grounds that black citizens were illegally excluded from the juries.

6. In 1937, Clarence Norris was again sentenced to die in the electric chair, however, the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1938 by order of Governor Bibb Graves. In 1944, Clarence Norris was released on parole. During that year his parole was revoked and it was not until 1946 that Clarence Norris was paroled again and during that same year his parole was declared delinquent.

Clarence Norris began his ordeal at age 19 and was 34 years of age when, after serving 15 years imprisonment for a crime which I do not believe he committed, fled Alabama. The episode in Alabama history known as the "Scottsboro Case" is not a proud moment. It was indicative of a time in our history when justice in our courts was not equally and impartially meted out. It was a time when men were judged by the color of their skin and not the content of their character.

The purpose of my writing this letter is to present this case to the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles for review and to recommend that Clarence Norris, the last known surviving member of the Scottsboro defendants, be given a full and complete pardon so that in these late years of his life he will not bear the unjust stigma of fugitive.

Board of Pardons and Paroles
August 5, 1976
Page 3

In taking a retrospective view of the actions of the judges, lawyers and members of the juries which tried these young black men in 1931, an attempt must be made to view their actions within the climate of the times with the myths, ignorance, prejudice and discrimination which prevailed throughout the nation.

I understand that as a general rule fugitives such as Clarence Norris are not considered for a pardon. I think generally this is a good rule but each case should be determined on its own merits. It is my strong belief that the case of Clarence Norris deserves an exception. Clarence Norris spent almost fifteen years of his life in prison, part of the time awaiting death, in the face of overwhelming evidence of his innocence.

It is my opinion after a thorough review of all aspects of the case of Clarence Norris that this individual never should have been charged with any offense against Ruby Bates or Victoria Price and that his repeated sentences of death and his 15 years spent incarcerated in Alabama prisons can only be termed tragic. As it is our duty to see that the laws are enforced and the guilty punished it is also our responsibility to see that the innocent go free. It is my opinion and recommendation that justice in the case of Clarence Norris has been too long delayed and I vigorously appeal to this board to grant him full pardon without delay.

If this office can be of service please contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "B. Baxley", with a stylized flourish at the end.

BILL BAXLEY
Attorney General

4 March 1975

Mr. James I. Meyerson, Esq.
Assistant General Counsel
NAACP Special Contributions Fund
1790 Broadway
New York, N. Y. 10019

Re: The Matter of Willie Norris

Dear Jim:

It appears that we have reached an impasse in our efforts on behalf of Mr. Norris. There are some Board members who just won't agree with the arrangement I discussed with Mr. Stephens.

We should consider very strongly the possibility of a new trial for Mr. Norris.

Keep in touch.

Sincerely yours,

Donald V. Watkins

DVW/111



STATE OF ALABAMA
BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36104



November 7, 1974

Ealon M. Lambert
Chairman
Norman F. Ussery
Associate Member
William R. Robinson
Associate Member

L. B. Stephens
Executive Director

Mr. Donald V. Watkins
Attorney at Law
352 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

RE: Clarence NORRIS
Alabama #39,745

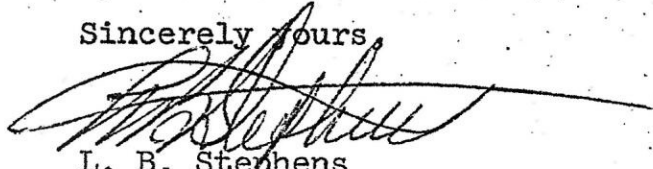
Dear Mr. Watkins:

This will acknowledge and thank you for your letter giving certain facts regarding Mr. Norris.

At the present time, one member of the Board is in the hospital where he has had surgery. We do not know at this time when he will return to the office. We have discussed this matter with the other two members and they were not in agreement as to considering him for parole immediately should he return here for a parole violation hearing.

If you will call this to our attention at a later date, we will be happy to discuss this matter with the member who is not now at the office.

Sincerely yours,



L. B. Stephens
Executive Director

LBS:jc

GRAY, SEAY & LANGFORD, P.A.

ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELLORS

352 DEXTER AVENUE

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36104

205-269-2563

FRED D. GRAY

SOLOMON S. SEAY, JR.

CHARLES D. LANGFORD

BILLY L. CARTER

CLEVELAND THORNTON

P. O. BOX 239

TUSKEGEE, ALABAMA 36083

205-727-4330

November 5, 1974

Mr. Levie B. Stephens,
Executive Director
State Pardons & Parole Board
State Office Building
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

Re: Willie Norris

Dear Mr. Stephens:

Pursuant to our conversation on October 21, I am making available a few facts concerning Mr. Norris and the circumstances surrounding his parole violation in 1946.

Willie Norris, alias Clarence Norris, was an original "Scottsboro Boy." He is now sixty-one years old and has a wife and two teenage girls. He now resides in a northern state.

Mr. Norris served approximately five of his fifteen years in prison on death row, but his various death sentences were reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court, and in 1939, the Governor commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment. He was paroled initially in 1944, but later fled the state. After being prevailed upon to return to Alabama, Norris was given two additional years in prison. He was paroled again in September, 1946 whereupon he left the state. This flight was necessitated by the strict terms and conditions of parole which Mr. Norris felt would ensure his return to prison again.

Mr. Norris is presently employed by a municipal government as a machine operator in a city warehouse. Since he left Alabama in 1946, Mr. Norris has held several positions, all of which might conveniently be categorized as labor jobs.

Mr. Norris has not been convicted of any serious offenses since he has been residing in the state where he now lives. He has been a cooperative, law-abiding citizen of the state and a faithful husband and father.

Mr. Levie B. Stephens
November 5, 1974
Page 2

I hope that this brief up-date on Mr. Norris will be helpful to you in our attempt to set-up formal dealings with the Board.

Please advise me as to any positive responses to the matters we discussed in your office.

Sincerely,

DW.

Donald V. Watkins

DVW/ql

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September 30, 1974

James I Meyerson, Esq.
1790 Broadway
New York, New York 10019

Re: The Matter of Willie Norris

Dear Mr. Meyerson:

excerpt
Attorney Gray has referred your letters of May 23 and September 20 to me, and requested that I see what can be done for Mr. Norris. Title 42, Section 18(3) of the Alabama Code governs pardons of persons whose sentence to death has been commuted. Such persons "...shall not...be eligible for a pardon unless sufficient evidence is presented to the Board of Pardons and Paroles to satisfy it that such person was innocent of the crime for which he was convicted and said board votes unanimously to grant such person a pardon, and the governor concurs in and approves the granting of the pardon."

I believe that a pardon is your first preference for Mr. Norris. As such, it would be quite helpful if you could supply us with materials which detail Mr. Norris' account of the Scottsboro case and documents his innocence of the alleged rape.

With respect to transferring Mr. Norris' parole status to New York, this would have to be done in accordance with the provisions of Title 42, Section 27 of the Code. If our request for a pardon is denied, we will then pursue this route.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Very truly yours,

GRAY, SEAY & LANGFORD

Donald V. Watkins / alb
Donald Watkins

DW:alb