

[City Point?, Virginia, May or June 1865]

Genl We the soldiers of the 36 U.S. Col[ored] Regt Humbly petition to you to alter the Affairs at Roanoke Island. We have served in the US Army faithfully and don our duty to our Country, for which we thank God (that we had the opportunity) but at the same time our family's are suffering at Roanoke Island, N.C.

1 When we were enlisted in the service we were prommised that our wives and family's should receive rations from goverment. The rations for our wives and family's have been (and are now cut down) to one half the regular ration. Consequently three or fours days out of every ten days, thee have nothing to eat. At the same time our ration's are stolen from the ration house by Mr Streeter the Asst Supt at the Island (and others) and sold while our family's are suffering for some thing to eat.

2nd Mr [Holland] S[r]teeter the Asst Supt of Negro aff's at Roanoke Island is a througher Cooper head a man who says that he is no part of a Abolitionist. takes no care of the colored people and has no Simpathy with the colored people. A man who kicks our wives and children out of the ration house or commissary, he takes no notice of their actual suffering and sells the rations and allows it to be sold, and our family's suffer for something to eat.

3rd Captn [Horace] James the Suptn in Charge has been told of these facts and has taken no notice of them. so has Coln Lahaman [Theodore Lehman of the 103d Pennsylvania] the Commander in Charge of Roanoke, but no notice is taken of it, because it comes from Contrabands or Freedmen the cause of much suffering is that Captn James has not paid the Colored people for their work for near a year and at the same time cuts the ration's off to one half so the people have neither provisions or money to buy it with. There are men on the Island that have been wounded at Dutch Gap Canal, working there, and some discharged soldiers, men that were wounded in the service of the U.S. Army, and returned home to Roanoke that Cannot get any rations and are not able to work, some soldiers are sick in Hospitals that have never been paid a cent and their familys are suffering and their children going crying without anything to eat.

4th our familys have no protection the white soldiers break into our houses act as they please steal our chickens rob our gardens and if any one defends their-Selves against them they are taken to the gard house for it. So our familys have no protection when Mr Streeter is here to protect them and will not do it.

5th Genl we the soldiers of the 36 U.S. Co Troops having familys at Roanoke Island humbly petition you to favour us by removeing Mr Streeter the present Asst Supt at Roanoke Island under Captn James.

Genl perhaps you think the Statements against Mr Streeter too strong, but we can prove them.

Genl order Chaplain Green to Washington to report the true state of things at Roanoke Island. Chaplain Green is an asst Supt at Roanoke Island, with Mr Holland Streeter and he can prove the facts. And there are plenty of white men here that can prove them also, and many more thing's not mentioned Signed in behalf of humanity

Richard Etheridge
Wm Benson

[Sergt Richard Etheridge and Wm Benson to Genl Howard, {May or June 1865}, Office of the Assistant Commissioner of North Carolina, Letters Received, Record Group 105, series 2453, Microfilm 843, reel 16, National Archives.]