

TEACHER'S GUIDE
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MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

Camps and the Community

In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to put young men aged 18-25 to work planting trees and helping farmers put soil conservation methods into effect. The federal government built more than 4,500 camps to house CCC members during their time in the program. Men in the CCC were paid \$30 per month, with \$25 sent home to their families. While people who lived near the camps appreciated the money that CCC members spent in their communities, this large influx of young male strangers was sometimes a source of tension. This letter to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt describes interactions between locals and CCC members in New Jersey.

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I know the President is much too busy with greater problems. So, I as one mother to another beg of you to take this matter up with him if he has a spare moment.

About four and one half miles from Sussex, N.J., and very near our little farm is a camp of re-forest workers, young men from 18 to 25, and sorry to say the roughest kind. Up until three weeks ago our daughters were free to go to and from the village unmolested. These fellows have been to our door and neighbors trying to sell over-alls, bits of jewelry or work in the garden for a little money.

Last Friday our High School at Sussex gave a dance for the graduation class. Four of these chaps in over-alls and work shirts walked in and demanded admittance since it was public. It ended in a fight and the town policeman had to be called.

Saturday night our little movie house, only open Friday and Saturday for our children who can only see pictures seldom. Again a crowd of them got in the house and because it was an old picture, they hissed and made all sorts of remarks about it. They were asked to leave and the language from them was terrible.

Now I am sure you will understand what we are suffering. Our community has never been so upset. Any hour of the night, Saturday and Sunday groups are on the road from the camp to Sussex and it isn't safe for women or girls to be driving alone. Last week one of my neighbors' daughters was driving alone and two of four fellows asked for a ride and she refused, of course,



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so they stood in her way where she couldn't turn out without going in the gutter or hitting them.

Now please, Mrs. R., won't you intercede for we Mothers here. And we shall be more than grateful.

Mrs. Chambers

Source: Chambers to Roosevelt, June 11, 1933, Box 956, Correspondence of Investigators, Division of Investigation, Record Group 35, U.S. National Archives (Washington, D.C.).

