

## Primary Sources: The First Days

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In 1933, Roy Wright, youngest of the Scottsboro Boys, was held in Birmingham Prison while his co-defendants languished on death row in Kilby Prison in Montgomery. Since he was only 13 at the time of the incident, he was to be tried by a juvenile court. F. Raymond Daniell, the *New York Times* reporter covering the Scottsboro cases had a chance to interview Wright and ask him about his recollection of the first days of the incident. The newspaper published the interview on March 10, 1933.

The firstest I knowed anything was wrong, or knowed who else was on that train was when that crowd of white men stopped the train and Paint Rock and took us off. They took us up the railroad bank to a white rock and stood us against it with their guns aimed at our heads.

One of the white men said to me, "Come on now, nigger, tell us who pushed those white boys off the train, 'cause we don't want to punish anybody but the guilty ones. If you tell us which ones did it we'll let you others go." And I told them I didn't know anything about it and hadn't seen nothing.

Then one of them said to me, "You know, nigger, we don't let no darkies hang around here, and if we catch you anywhere near here after dark we'll shoot you. Now get going."

Andy (that's my brother), Haywood, Eugene and me -- we started away. Nobody said nothing until we had walked some little way and then they called us back and loaded us on a truck, tied our hands and feet with rope and carried us to the jail in Scottsboro...

[At the first trials in Scottsboro] I was sitting in a chair in front of the judge and one of those girls was testifying. One of the deputy sheriffs leaned over to me and asked me if I was going to turn State's evidence, and I said no, because I didn't know anything about this case.

Then the trial stopped awhile and the deputy sheriff beckoned to me to come out into another room -- the room back of the place the judge was sitting -- and I went. They whipped me and it seemed like they was going to kill me. All the time they kept saying, "Now will you tell?" and finally it seemed like I couldn't stand no more and I said yes.

Then I went back into the courtroom and they put me up on the chair in front of the judge and began asking a lot of questions, and I said I had seen Charlie Weems and Clarence Norris in the gondola car with the white girls.

[Later, he said that that testimony was false:]

I didn't see no white girls and no white boys either.

[After they were convicted and sentenced to death, Patterson was still defiant, even at gun point:]

Haywood ain't afraid of nothing or anybody. He just took the gun away from that deputy sheriff and said, "We've been sentenced to death already for nothing and we ain't going to take any more beatings. Go ahead, now, and shoot if you want to, but I'll shoot too."

It wouldn't have been no good, though because the gun Haywood got was only a .32 and they had all those machine guns and things. I don't believe it would have gone off, even.