



# History

"**Down in the Valley**", also known as "**Birmingham Jail**," is a traditional country-blues American folk song. It is a popular Appalachian Mountain courting song that descended from a British air and likely originated during the development of the Industrial United States from 1870 to 1900. It is also popular with American cowboys and has developed ties to the the American Civil Rights Movement.

In addition to the Appalachian beginnings, there are other claims about how the song and particularly the Birmingham Jail verses came to be. The

Birmingham City Jail is first mentioned in history in the 1890s and was closed in 2012. According to one biographer of Lead Belly he performed "Birmingham Jail" for Texas

Governor Pat Neff at the Sugarland Penitentiary in 1924. Guitarist Jimmie Tarlton claimed to have written the lyrics in 1925 while he was jailed in Birmingham for moonshining. It was first recorded by Tarlton and his partner Tom Darby on November 10, 1927 in Atlanta, Georgia for Columbia Records.

Darby and Tarlton use "down in the levee" in place of "down in the valley"; the version sung by Lead Belly in 1934 substitutes "Shreveport jail" for "Birmingham jail."

The **Letter from Birmingham Jail**, also known as **The Negro Is Your Brother**, is an open letter written on April 16, 1963, by Martin Luther King Jr. The letter defends the strategy of nonviolent resistance to racism. It says that people have a moral responsibility to break unjust laws and to take direct action rather than waiting potentially forever for justice to come through the courts. King writes, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". The letter, written during the 1963 Birmingham campaign, was widely published, and became an important text for the American Civil Rights Movement.

*[mc3betzwood.wordpress.com](http://mc3betzwood.wordpress.com), [hwww.smliv.com/](http://hwww.smliv.com/), <http://www.balladofamerica.com/> and find Dr. King's entire letter from the Birmingham jail and more on Wikipedia*

