

African American Westward Migration

Carol Petett

Taylor Allderdice High School

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Overview

The history of the United States is a history of people on the move. Early explorers came looking for wealth in the form of trade and the establishment of trade routes. Others came seeking adventure and wealth and claimed vast expanses of land for their king. The ownership of land meant power and wealth to their regents in Europe. Settlers came for religious and economic freedoms. They cleared the land for farming and built their towns and cities along the seacoasts and great waterways of this vast land. As the farmland and towns along the seacoast filled with people the march continued inland. The quest for new land and the promise of “a better day” that came with it encouraged people to pursue their dreams and journey westward. Mountains were crossed, land was cleared of timber, crops were planted, and new towns were established. The frontier lands were pushed farther west, wealth land and new transportation systems were developed to aid settlers in their conquest of the next frontier. The barrier was mountains, rivers and desert sometimes it was people. Two groups of people were not included in large numbers in this westward expansion and sometimes overlooked were, Native Americans, who stood in the way of this prosperity and African slaves. Neither of these groups was considered part of the quest for land ownership. Native Americans were forced from their homes to make way for newly arriving people. The African slave was thought to remain in his current station in life with no consideration given to land ownership since this was to remain the domain of free men only. However, the story of these people of color is often overlooked when reading the history of migration in the American West. People of African descent have been a part of western migration and settlement of this country since its earliest beginnings and no true history of western migration can be written without including them. This curriculum unit will look at these people and the factors that led to their migration. This unit will focus particular attention on Kansas and the migration of the “exodusters” after Reconstruction.

Rationale

Section 1 of Indiana’s 1850 Constitution read: “No Negro or mulatto shall come into or settle in the State after the adoption of this Constitution.

To begin the study of African people in the Americas we must begin with early explorations to the continent. The Spanish were the first group of Europeans to arrive and stay in the Americas. The first of these early explorers was Christopher Columbus who sailed to the Americas in 1492. In that group were a number of Africans, their names lost to history, who sailed with Columbus on his explorations to the

new world. Blacks accompanied Balboa in 1513 to the Pacific and were with Cortez when he defeated the Aztecs in Mexico. They were also with Pizarro when he conquered Peru and they also helped build St. Augustine, America's oldest city.

The best known of these Africans, was Estevanico, who accompanied Father Marcos de Niza's expedition to look for the Seven Cities of Gold in what is now the American Southwest. The Indians had never seen a black person and were intrigued by the color of his skin and thought he possessed some special powers. The Spanish soon exploited this and encouraged the belief that Estevanico was a medicine man. He was then able to develop a special relationship with the natives and was usually the person responsible for communicating with them. In his role as scout for the expedition and chief communicator he was able to determine what roads to follow as the expedition moved into the interior of the southwest looking for the Seven Cities of Gold. Estevanico was sent ahead of the expedition and told to send crosses back to the main part of the expedition indicating how close he was to the Seven Cities of Gold. The size of the crosses was to indicate how close he was to Cibola. Estevanico sent the crosses back to the expedition every few days with the size of the crosses getting bigger and bigger. Word reached the expedition that Estevanico was being well received by the Indians and received gifts of gold and turquoise. One day the crosses stopped arriving at the expedition and no word came for several weeks. Finally an Indian from Estevanico's party arrived back to Father Marcos to say that Estevanico and all the members of his party had been killed by another group of hostile Indians as they were nearing Cibola. Father Marcos and his expedition left and returned to Mexico. Cibola was never found.

Blacks also accompanied French explorers to the new world. In 1765, Jean Batiste Pointe du Sable, a black man educated in Paris, came to New France and built a trading post at the mouth of the Chicago River. This trading post included a forty foot long house, bake house, dairy and smoke house went on to become the city of Chicago.

With the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from the French, then President Thomas Jefferson ordered an exploration of the territory by Lewis and Clark. York, the personal servant and slave of Captain William Clark, accompanied Lewis and Clark on the expedition that opened up the west for settlement. York proved invaluable as a hunter, explorer, trader and scout. He also, along with Sacajawea acted as an interpreter for the party. At the end of the two and a half year expedition York received his freedom.

Although the majority of blacks were slaves many who found their way into states outside of the south were free people. These people received their freedom in a variety of ways some escaped from bondage and made their way to free territories. Their owners through wills manumitted some slaves, while others purchased their freedom. Although, no longer enslaved and considered free men they did not enjoy equal treatment under the law. Free people could not testify in court against a white person not could they vote. Many had obtained a skill while enslaved but found that as free men they could not work in the skilled trades and were relegated to the lowest category of jobs.

Some states did not allow blacks to take up residence within their borders. The state of Ohio, in 1807, passed a law requiring that blacks furnish a bond in the amount of five hundred dollars as a guarantee of good conduct when they entered the state. The state of Illinois required blacks to post a bond of \$1000.00, Indiana's Constitution of 1851 forbade blacks from living there. In the state of Ohio this law was rarely enforced, nor was it always enforced in the other states. However, once these laws became known blacks fleeing slavery did not tarry long in these places hoping to find whites sympathetic to them, they continued to move on looking for some place where they could enjoy a higher degree of freedom. Often this quest for freedom took them west.

James Beckwourth, a black frontiersman, was considered one of the most Famous Indian fighters of his generation. Originally from St. Louis, he escaped slavery at age 19 and learned the life of a frontiersman. In 1850 Beckwourth discovered a pass through the Sierra Nevada Mountains that became an important gateway to California during the Gold Rush.

After the fur trappers and frontiers men came the settlers. In 1833 a party of 385 free men, women and

children left the Roanoke River Valley of Virginia for land in Ohio. Senator John Randolph, of Virginia, had freed his slaves and bequeathed land to them in Ohio. However, upon reaching Ohio these newly freed people discovered that Randolph's heirs had swindled them of their land. Some in the party chose to stay in Ohio with the help of white settlers in the area, while others continued their trek west to Indiana.

For much of the nineteenth century African Americans viewed the west as a place of economic opportunity and a refuge from racial restrictions. In 1833, at the Third Annual Convention for the Improvement of the Free People of Color, which met in Philadelphia, emigration to Mexican Texas was endorsed over emigration back to Africa. The delegates subscribed to the popular belief of the time that the west could offer a new start for anyone. (1)

As the frontier continued to move westward, blacks moved west as well, although not in the great numbers of other groups migrating westward. Many slaves walked alongside their masters as they made their way west. When Mexico offered Texas land to Americans slaveholders and their slaves followed Steven Austin. Slaves served as cowhands and rode cattle trains to Kansas.

Other blacks rode into Texas as free men with the promise to start life anew with the offer of free land. Blacks also fought in the war for Texas independence and received free land for their services. However, once Texas joined the Union as a slave state the black men that fought for independence were quickly forgotten. Some of these men lost their land, and found their rights restricted. Their presence was no longer wanted in the land they had helped to defend.

In 1844, a free black man by the name of George Washington Bush, who had fought at the Battle of New Orleans with Andrew Jackson, and a group of white companions found their way to the Columbia River Valley in the Oregon Territory. His group soon received word that Oregon had instituted black exclusion laws restricting the movement of blacks within and to the state. The law stated that any black person entering Oregon Territory would be whipped and forced to leave. Bush's companions came to his defense and said they would fight to protect him, as a result the law was not carried out.

Bush and his companions became the first American settlers north of the Columbia River. Although, the law in Oregon forbid blacks from homesteading Bush's friend, Colonel Michael Simmons, a member of the Oregon Legislature had Congress pass a special act granting Bush 640 acres of land.

Bush and his family went on to become prominent and one of the leading pioneers of Oregon and Washington, Bush Prairie is named after him. (2)

The California Gold Rush brought both slaves and free men into the gold fields. Slaves were brought to help with the work in the gold fields, while freemen came looking to strike it rich. Both black and white prospectors worked the gold fields of California side by side and initially encountered little difficulty. By 1855 California's black population had amassed enough wealth to make it the wealthiest black community in the country. With this wealth came churches and schools to educate and see to the spiritual needs of its members.

The cities of San Francisco and Sacramento became the political centers for middle class blacks in California. These two cities also served as seaports for blacks going into the gold fields of California. Gold miners came to these cities for entertainment and to retire or seek employment after their time in the gold mines.

Blacks served as stewards on riverboats, barbers, laundry workers, cooks and some went into business for themselves. By 1854 in San Francisco there were two black-owned joint stock companies, four boot and shoe stores, four clothing stores, two furniture stores, sixteen barbershops and two bathhouses.

Middle class blacks lived throughout the city and created institutions that brought people of color together from all parts of the city. Churches grew and provided both spiritual and social support for members of the community. Out of this institution self-help groups were formed to assist new comers and encourage

others to migrate to California.

Black Californians held the first of four statewide Colored Conventions beginning in 1855 with the last held in 1865. These all-male conventions were designed to present grievances and promote black success. These conventions had their roots in the first such convention held in Philadelphia in 1817. By the 1830's smaller conventions had been held in Ohio, Michigan and Illinois. Although these California conventions showcased black political sophistication and success they were convened to address problems which continued to exist in the black communities. One of the biggest problems for the community was the testimony law. Under this law a black person still could not prosecute a white person in a court of law unless another white person witnessed that a crime had been committed.

The Conventions of 1856 and 1857 addressed the Testimony Law. The 1857 Convention condemned the U.S. Land Office's prohibition on black homesteading of public lands and protested the exclusion of black children from public schools in rural areas. When the Democratic controlled state legislature refused to do away with the testimony law and threatened to outlaw black migration to the state over four hundred blacks migrated to British Columbia in 1858 in protest.

However, black San Franciscans continued to fight for voting rights and repeal of the testimony law. By 1862 they formed the Franchise League that was led by Mary Pleasant, a former slave from Georgia. The Franchise League was able to gather over five hundred signatures from both blacks and whites opposing the testimony law. These petitions were then submitted to the state legislature. In 1863 the California Legislature repealed the anti-black provisions of the testimony law and had removed discriminatory barriers to education.

After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued blacks in California's largest cities began to take a more visible role in the general community. (3)

Kansas was the only other western state to have a significant number of free blacks prior to 1865. During the 1850's, small groups of abolitionists from the East had set up Underground Railroad stations. One of these men was John Brown who lived for a brief period of time in Kansas. Brown led a group of men called the Jayhawkers who raided for slaves in Missouri and led them to freedom across the border. By 1865 over 12,000 blacks were living in Kansas making up 9% of the population. Lawrence, Kansas was the best-advertised anti-slavery town in the world.

Upon Kansas' admission to the Union in 1861, the state legislature selected as one of its Senators James H. Lane, a staunch abolitionist. Lane made as his immediate goal to defend Kansas from the secessionist state Missouri by raising a regiment of twelve hundred troops. These troops were ordered to march in to southwest Missouri in 1861. News of this encouraged fugitive slaves to seek out his camp near Springfield. Without authorization from above he enlisted fugitives into his command and ordered women and children to Kansas to save the crop and provide fuel for the winter. These fugitives, Lane declared as free. When word of this spread other fugitives followed to Kansas. By the end of the Civil War Missouri's slave population had decreased greatly while Kansas' free black population had increased to over 12,000. (4)

Before the close of the Civil War northern teachers, both black and white made their way to the south and began the task of teaching slaves who had been denied the right to read and write. By 1865 when southern slaves received their freedom, northern religious organizations, along with the Freedmen's Bureau began to organize schools in the south. Many freedmen had gained some hold on literacy, served in the army and wanted to enjoy the rights of free men and pushed for the right to vote. Older people wanted to learn to read the bible. Dozens of colleges and universities were established throughout the south in the 1860's and 1870's. The primary purpose of these schools was to educate black students to become teachers so that they could in turn educate other blacks.

The Civil War ended with the defeat of the Confederacy and the preservation of the Union. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, which had existed for over two hundred fifty years, was ratified

on January 31, 1865 by twenty-seven states and declared in effect on December 18, 1865.

By December 1865 four million slaves were free. What did freedom mean to them? Freedom meant labor could produce income for the laborer not for the master. Freedom meant that families need no longer fear being sold away from one another. Freedom meant no more whippings. Freedom meant land to own, live on and cultivate. As with all other Americans in the nineteenth century, land ownership meant economic security. But ownership of land would not come easy to former slaves.

The number of blacks and whites suffering extreme privations after the war was immense. The task of providing for all these people was overwhelming. Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands—called the Freedmen's Bureau at the end of the war. It was created as a temporary agency to assist freedmen to make the transition to freedom but also gave aid to whites suffering the ravages of war. The Bureau had never been adequately staffed to take care of the needs of so many people. The Bureau built temporary housing for the homeless, fed the hungry and cared for the sick and orphans. Millions of rations were distributed and medical care was given to people both black and white suffering from small pox, yellow fever and cholera. There were many people left unattended. The bureau was also given the task of helping the freedmen obtain land; gain an education; negotiate labor contracts with white planters; settle legal and criminal disputes involving black and white people; provide food, medical care and transportation for both black and white people left destitute from the war.

General Howard took the task of land distribution quite seriously. In July 1865, General Howard issued Circular 13 ordering agents of the Freedmen's Bureau to set aside forty-acre sites for freedmen. His order, however, did not have the effect of law and so was never instituted. In spite of that many blacks did make claims to land under squatters rights. Their claim was based on the belief that since they had worked the land and not enjoyed the fruits of their labors under slavery that now as freemen they had the right to those fruits. (5)

By 1865 it appeared that President Johnson had abandoned the freedmen and their future would be in the hands of their former masters. Andrew Johnson became President after Lincoln's assassination. At the end of the war began to pardon thousands of former Confederates and returned their land to them. Johnson, himself a slave owner, was convinced that blacks were inferior beings and could not govern themselves. He had lost his enthusiasm for punishing the southern states. In May 1865 he granted amnesty to former Confederates willing to swear allegiance to the United States. Southern confederates who had been leaders, prior to the Civil War, were encouraged to return to their positions of authority. These leaders called constitutional conventions, held elections and prepared to regain their place in the Union. Johnson's only request was that each Confederate state formally accept the Thirteenth Amendment and repudiate Confederate war debts. The Freedmen felt that this land given to them under Special Field Order # 15 should remain theirs to keep and cultivate since they had worked and cultivated this land under slavery with no compensation. They also felt that land ownership was the only way they could be free from the oppression they had suffered under slavery.

Radical Republicans felt that black men had to protect themselves and protect the Republican Party in the south and the only way to do this would be through suffrage. In 1866 Senator Lyman Trumbull a moderate Republican from Illinois introduced the first civil rights bill in American history. This proposal made any person born in the United States a citizen (except Indians) and entitled them to rights protected by the U.S. government. Black people would possess the same legal rights as white people. The Fourteenth Amendment was passed. Its passage forced states to accept their residents as citizens and to guarantee that their rights as citizens be safeguarded.

By 1867 Radical Republicans had taken control of Reconstruction from President Johnson and their policies brought black men into the political system and political offices.

The First Reconstruction Act was passed over Johnson's veto in 1867. It divided the south into five military districts, each under the command of a general. Military personnel would protect lives and property while new civilian governments were formed.

The Reconstruction Act stated that all adult males in the former Confederacy were eligible to vote except for those who had actively supported the Confederacy.

Reconstruction after the war created a new order in the South. This new order was different socially, politically and to a lesser extent economically for blacks in the south. Black men not only became involved in the political process and voted in elections they were also elected to political office. With their political involvement they began to think of their own interests. Often these interests conflicted with the interests of whites in the south. Whites who did not favor the new order in the south set about recapturing their political power from the Republicans. White southerners did not take kindly to the new political and economic power of former slaves. They could not accept blacks as having the ability to vote and participate in government or to hold elected positions, and continued to see blacks as free labor. Southern whites felt they could and had the right to manipulate the political outcome in the south and revert back to the conditions prior to the war, with blacks supplying free labor. When the effort to control political elections failed, violence, again escalated.

To help them return to power the former confederates held new state constitutional conventions. These conventions gave no consideration to blacks in the political system as stated by the newly Amendments in the Constitution nor did these newly drafted state constitutions guarantee their equal rights under the law.

After the elections in the southern states and the return to office of local officials, the legislatures of these states convened and drafted the “black codes”. The purpose of these black codes was to guarantee a subservient labor class, much like the old plantation system. Blacks had to sign labor contracts with whites for unspecified periods of time. Black children as young as age two were to be apprenticed to whites to age 21 years and their duties and obligations were to be spelled out in the contracts.

In Mississippi, State Black Codes of 1865 made it illegal to sell or lease land to blacks. For the most part these newly freed men felt they were returning to the plantation system they lived under prior to the war. Now after the war they found that although free they had only their labor as farmers to sustain them and they would have to return to farming to support themselves and their families. Although they could now enter into contracts with whites to do work the system of land usage developed would keep them poor and guaranteed to increase their debt each year.

Undermanned and understaffed by 1866 the Freedmen’s Bureau was encouraging blacks to sign labor contracts with white landowners. Eventually these labor contracts would once again put blacks under white authority with the contracts usually referring to blacks as servants and whites as masters. If a freedman refused to sign a contract he could be arrested. These contracts were theoretically between two equals, however, they were seldom fair since blacks were not considered the equal of whites. Thus new systems of land management developed. One was share cropping, the other was the crop lien system both of these proved to be no better for blacks than the plantation system that existed prior to the war. Under the system of share cropping, farmers were to work the land of the landowner with the landowner providing the seed, and tools for the crop. For this the sharecropper was to repay the landowner for the use of his tools, seed and animals once the crop, usually cotton, had been gathered.

The division of the cotton crop and the rent depended on sharing. One half of the crop went to the furnisher of the capital—land implements, mules—and one half for the laborer. In other areas of the south especially in Mississippi the division was based on a rough one thirds basis. One third of the crop went to the planter, one third to the laborer, and a third to whoever furnished the implements and the mules. The prices for cotton did not take into consideration the fluctuating prices of cotton in the market, the price was fixed and non negotiable. Planters usually owned stores that sold goods to farmers on credit at higher costs and on credit. Men were sent into the fields by the planters to determine how good the cotton crop would be that year and set the bills owed the store based on the anticipated cotton harvest. As a result most of these small cotton farmers could not get out of debt. No matter what the market price for cotton it was never paid to the farmer. Prices remained fixed according to custom. When the price of cotton increased farmers did not share in the good times and never realized a profit

and could not get out of debt or put money aside to buy land. Furthermore, when the market price of cotton dropped too much the planter simply raised the price of goods sold to the farmer from his store that supplied the goods needed by the farmer not related to farming.

Before the farmer could determine how much money he made for the year he had to gin his cotton land pay for it. Rents were based on cotton being picked, ginned and wrapped. Tenants were forced to gin their cotton at the landlord's gin, at the landlord's rates. Farmers complained that if they did attempt to have their cotton ginned other than at the landlord's gin for better prices they did so at risk to their life and their family, or whipped.

In the crop lien system, the farmer took out loans to finance his crop. The agreement stated that money taken out in the form of a loan would be paid back at the time the crop, usually cotton, had been harvested and ginned. The loan maker also extended credit for other goods as well. The prices for goods to the tenant farmer were high and kept the amount of credit extended high. The merchant worked with the landowner to control the price paid for crop and saw that the amount extended for credit increased. If the tenant did not extend his own credit the store merchant would extend it for him. If the tenant refused or argued about his debt he would find himself in worse shape the following year with no one willing to extend him credit at all. In this way by keeping the costs of production up and extending credit while keeping the price of the crop low the farmer would never get out from debt. No matter how hard he worked.

Exorbitant rents for land and this crop-lien system were developed to guarantee that a cheap form of labor would continue to exist in the south. Cotton was still the main crop farmed in the south. Growing cotton was extremely labor intensive a person renting land, usually a part of the former plantation, could count only the members of his immediate family as his work force. As a result, the total number of acres rented was small. The amount paid in rent was usually figured in pounds of cotton per acre.

Fourteen years after the end of the Civil War black landownership in Mississippi was nearly nonexistent. The dreams of the freedman to own his own home and land continued to exist as determined as the freedmen were to own their own land, the southern plantation owner was as determined that the freedmen should return to the status they held prior to the war, a cheap form of labor under the old plantation system

This they called "Redemption" because they saw themselves redeeming their south from Negroes. The period of "Redemption" was a long process that began in the early 1870's.

On the other hand with blacks gaining citizenship, the right to vote and legal rights freedmen began to make additional demands and expectations of government. These freedmen demonstrated an independence and fearlessness that showed that they knew the difference from being slaves and freedmen willing to take care of them. These freedmen wanted to take care of themselves and their families and act in their own interests. Black laborers were usually paid less than their white counterparts for the same job this led to labor unrest in the 1860's and 1870's with men calling for sit-down strikes demanding same pay for same work. Black longshoremen in Mobile, and New Orleans walked off the job in 1867. In 1869 the Colored National Labor Union was organized for black longshoremen.

As freedmen became educated they would demand respect and not step aside for their former white masters and submit to the old plantation system. This new freedman was often seen as insolent and was dealt with by violence. Violence continued to escalate throughout the south with the Freedmen's Bureau either reluctant or unable to do anything to stop it. Most Union troops had been removed from the south and protection of these newly freed people was left to the local authorities, which meant that their protection could not be guaranteed. Much of the violence stemmed from the frustration many southerners felt by their loss of the war and loss of a way of life based on free labor. Now, unable to resume their life, as it had existed prior to the war they turned their frustration into rage and directed to

the cause of all their problems—freedmen.

A number of forces began to emerge that would lead to the “exodusters movement”. One of these emerging forces resulted from the frustration felt by the white planter class with blacks who no longer knew their place. Many former Confederates were still convinced that blacks were incapable of governing themselves and working as wage earners. They blamed their own fall from grace on the freedmen and were determined to return to status quo prior to the war with blacks once again supplying a cheap form of labor, as slaves, on plantations. The Ku Klux Klan was formed and would use violence, intimidation, and fear to return to those days.

The Klan was founded in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1866. Originally it was a social club for former confederates and drew its members from all levels of southern society from businessmen to poor farmers. Its popularity, initially as a social group of former Confederates soon spread across state lines. As it grew in popularity, its philosophy changed as well and the Klan concentrated its attention on re-establishing the old order. The Klan emerged in rural areas where blacks were a large minority and their vote could affect the outcome of elections. Wearing hoods and masks the Klan, or “nightriders”, used fear to keep blacks in their place. Acts of violence, or bulldozing, usually took place at night with Klan members in hoods, carrying torches and armed. If fear did not work the Klan would use threats. The burning of someone’s property often followed these threats. If these failed the Klan would embark on a campaign of terror and violence against supporters, both black and white, of the Republican Party. Usually some form of corporal punishment such as a whipping, tar and feathering, or lynching would be used. Needless to say these acts of violence greatly reduced support for the Republicans and eliminated its leaders.

As acts of violence by the Klan escalated laws were passed against it these laws were difficult to enforce with many members of the local sheriff’s office and deputies being members of the Klan. Also, since Klan members wore hoods it was often difficult to identify them in court and because of fear and violence people were too afraid to testify against them in court. Blacks were not able to receive justice in the courts against the Klan.

By the mid 1870’s both Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner are dead. These two men had become the spokesmen for blacks in the Congress. Also, the north was no longer interested in the Negro problem. The north was immersed in an expanding economy, urban growth, industrialization and the problems each brought with it. The Negro problem was now seen as a regional problem best left to the south. After all, a war had been fought and many died it was now time to move beyond the Negro problem and look to healing the nation as a whole.

The nation was not just experiencing the urban sprawl and industrialization of its urban cities but was expanding westward as well. With the Homestead Act of 1862, which offered 160 acres to anyone willing to move west, and the building of the railroad into the west the country’s concerns had grown beyond the territorial issues of the Civil War.

By the end of the war thousands of freedmen are returning home looking for family members who had moved from the plantations. Two of these men go on to play prominent roles in the exodus of blacks to Kansas. One of these men was Henry Adams; the other was Benjamin “pap” Singleton.

Henry Adams was from Caddo Parrish, Louisiana where he functioned as a faith healer, “doctor”, and peddler. At the end of the Civil War, Adams joined the army and was stationed in New Orleans, Louisiana where he saw first hand the ill treatment blacks experienced by whites. While in the army he learned to read and write. Upon his discharge from the army he returned to Shreveport, Louisiana where he found that the conditions for blacks that existed prior to his entry into the army had not much changed.(5)

The fact that Adams was literate worked to his advantage within the freedmen’s community. He and other discharged black soldiers now could help black tenant farmers by reading over the work contracts

they had signed with whites to make sure they were not cheated out of their wages. The fact that these farmers now had people advocating for them did not sit well with the former plantation owners who saw black soldiers as a threat to their attempt to return blacks to a condition of forced labor.

After five years of freedom and continued violence, intimidation and harassment directed against the freedmen's community a group of black ex soldiers, including Henry Adams, formed a secret society called "the Council" or "Committee". Its' main purpose was to collect information on the condition of black people in Louisiana. The Council collected information from 1870 to 1874 and by 1875 called for the federal government to aid blacks in their migration to Liberia. The "Council" also helped freedmen vote in the election of 1870 by distributing information on how to vote and informing freedmen of the differences between the Republicans and Democrats. The "Council" favored the Republican Party in the election of 1870 and made this fact well known to the freedmen. The freedmen were educated to the fact that the old plantation masters and members of the Confederacy belonged to the Democratic Party who saw the freedman as slaves still, to be controlled and manipulated both politically and economically by once again providing the south with a system of free labor.

To counter the actions of Henry Adams' "The Council" whites organized the "White League" and redoubled their acts of violence against black men of prominence. Black men were targeted as troublemakers and targeted with death others employed in the community by white landowners lost their jobs overnight and sometimes their property and their lives.

The situation in Louisiana had become so out of control that the Republican governor in 1874, requested federal troops to help curb the violence directed against blacks in Northern Louisiana. The Council and Henry Adams also sent an accompanying letter along with Republican Governor William Pitt Kellogg's letter stating first hand acts of violence against freedmen. The federal troops were sent and, although, acts of violence did not completely stop their numbers and in some cases level of violence did diminish.

In 1875 the Council with delegates from a number of states met in New Orleans. Henry Adams accompanied a group of ministers and helped influence its direction. Groups of delegates from Texas, Mississippi and Louisiana were argued the case for black migration to other states. However, Adams argued for migration to Liberia, but argued further that migration out of the south was imperative to the survival of black people. But many at the conference did not think enough time had passed to support such a massive migration and felt that more time was needed to get the south accustomed to the idea of blacks as wage earners. As a result the final outcome of this first conference was for the delegates to return home and work for the election of Republicans and blacks to political office.

The election of 1877 was demoralizing to freedmen in the south with the Democrats winning victory after victory and taking over the state government. To show the degree of hopelessness rampant amongst freedmen in the south, a petition was sent to the President of the United States asking the federal government to either help the freedmen migrate to territories within the states or to help provide safe passage for blacks to Liberia. Additional correspondence from Adams and the group in Louisiana took place with the Colonization Council, led by John H.B. Latrobe, which had helped small numbers of people migrate back to Liberia over the years. But by this time the people of Louisiana were not the only people thinking of migrating from the south. The Colonization Council received letters requesting assistance from throughout the south asking its help for large numbers of people to leave the south and redemption. The demand for help was overwhelming as was the need for money. Migration to Liberia was not to be.

Along with the lack of money Henry Adams became ill and was no longer seen as the central rallying point for migration to Liberia and Yellow Fever struck in one Louisiana town after another making communication between towns impossible. The people of Louisiana had to look for answers to their problems in the newly redeemed south elsewhere.

Benjamin "pap" Singleton was seventy years old in 1879 and had grown old in slavery. He had escaped

slavery and had been returned to slavery a number of times in his youth. Eventually, he escaped to Canada where he remained for a short time. He was never in the army as was Henry Adams as he was too old for military service. After the Civil War Singleton returned to Nashville, Tennessee where he was to carry out his calling from God which he saw as leading black people out of the former slave states.

Unlike Adams, Singleton did not see the need for blacks to participate in voting even though he had voted in several elections himself. His main concern was to have black people gain economic independence through the purchase of their own farms. He felt that through economic independence a people could then gain and receive political might. As early as the late 1860's Singleton had gone on record as trying to convince blacks to purchase their own farms, and he encouraged them to think of Kansas as the place where those farms should be purchased. However, in the 1860's black people did not want to leave their homes and families in Tennessee. After a time it became apparent that there was very little available land in Tennessee and that any land available was too expensive for freedmen to purchase. In order to become economically independent it would become necessary to buy land elsewhere, Singleton again encouraged settlements in Kansas.

By 1873, a group of families went to Kansas to look at the possibility of homesteading there. Their report was favorable, and Singleton himself visited Kansas in 1873 and found that land that had been Cherokee reservations was suitable for black homesteads. It was not until 1876 that Singleton began to make inquiries to the governor of Kansas about blacks homesteading to Kansas. In 1877 Singleton took out an ad in a Nashville newspaper indicating his willingness to supply people interested in migrating to Kansas with information. In 1878 Singleton started sending out circulars stating that if interested he would begin escorting people to Cherokee County Kansas for the purpose of setting up homesteads there. To encourage further migration into Kansas he established the Edgefield Real Estate Association and sponsored mass meetings in which he talked about the need for blacks to become concerned with their plight both spiritually and secularly.

Throughout 1878, the Edgefield Real Estate and Homestead Association carried on its mission of educating blacks to the advantages of migrating to Kansas. The Association spread its word through pamphlets sent to churches, picnics, rallies and word of mouth. The Association also took working class black people to Kansas and incorporated the Singleton Colony in Dunlap, Morris County Kansas in 1879.

The exodus of blacks from the southern states of Tennessee, Louisiana and Mississippi would grow to 40,000 people eventually. Some of these people stayed in Kansas and established a number of "black towns". The oldest of these still remaining is Nicodemus in Graham County Kansas. Other of these early "Exodusters" made their way to some of the urban areas of Kansas. Once in Kansas many of these homesteaders found that the good farmland had been taken and the land left was not good for farming and so they continued to move west with some returning to their homes in the south.

Objectives

This paper addresses blacks as a people migrating from hardship and oppression to a place that at least promises a better life for them. The hope for a better life is the reason all groups of people leave their homes whether these are groups from Eastern or Southern Europe in the nineteenth century or "boatpeople" from Vietnam in the twentieth century all people want the same thing which is to live in peace with his fellow man and provide for the safety and security of his own family. By the end of this unit students should be able to understand that the history of the United States is also a history of the black people in this country and that the history of this people, like the history of all Americans can not nor should it be denied or overlooked. It is also important that all students know of the many contributions made by people of color to the exploration and settlement of the nation including the west. The settlement of the nation's west is a history that has been romanticized, as a place of opportunity and

adventure and it is important that all students be able to share in that idea of romance, mystery and excitement and see a face like their own looking back at them through the pages history.

Strategies

Students will be able to define primary and secondary sources and distinguish between primary and secondary sources. Students will also be able to evaluate primary sources based on the criteria of time and place and bias of the source. Critical thinking skills include the ability to define and clarify problems, to judge information related to a problem, and to solve problems and draw conclusions. Historical literacy is the development of time and chronology, analyzing cause and effect, understanding the reasons for continuity and change and recognizing history as a common memory, with political implications. (6)

The teacher will guide students through a general discussion what the words “primary” and “secondary” means to them. The teacher will lead a discussion on both primary and secondary resources. Students will be asked to give examples of each. The teacher will then display the definitions of Primary and secondary resources which have been taken from the library web site of the University of California, Berkley.(7) In order to evaluate the sources gathered students will be given worksheets for evaluating a source. These worksheets will help students know what questions to ask, when grappling with the meanings of primary sources while attempting to interpret it and place it in its historical context.

The questions for analyzing primary sources will include:

1. Who is the author of the source? (name, and description if available) What are the author’s credentials, background?
2. What kind of source is it? Was it created on a spur of the moment or a deliberate process?
3. Did the recorder have firsthand knowledge of the event? Or, did the recorder report what others saw and heard?
4. Was the recorder a neutral party, or did the creator have opinions or interests that might have influenced what was recorded? If they had influences what may they have been?
5. Did the recorder produce the source for personal use, for one or more individuals, or for a large audience?
6. Was the source meant to be public or private?
7. Did the recorder wish to inform or persuade others? (Checking the words in the source will tell you if the recorder was trying to be objective or persuasive). Did the recorder have reasons to be honest or dishonest?
8. When was the source published? Was the information recorded during the event, immediately after the event, or after some lapse of time? How much time elapsed? (8))

Students may complete these questions either in groups or individually. Once this part of the activity is completed students should return to the list of primary sources from the University of California, Berkley list and select primary sources of their own and evaluate them using the worksheets. This part of the activity may also be used for evaluation.

Classroom Activities:

After completing the activities for analyzing primary sources through the questions listed in the strategy section. Students should use the computer lab and the *Library of Congress American Memory* web site so they can see the original documents. The document analysis work sheets (9), Appendix 2 and also from the Libray of Congress, should be distributed and reviewed with the class prior to going to the computer lab so that students are familiar with analyzing these primary sources. They will then use these worksheets to analyze the newspaper articles on “*Bulldozing a Postmaster*”; “*How Grant Killed K. K. Klanism*”; “*Kansas City and Wyandotte*”; and the “*Report*” by Major General E. R. S. Casey Commander in Chief of the Gulf. All of these documents are found on the “*American Memory*” section of the *Library of Congress* web site at www.loc.gov. These analysis sheets may be used as the basis of discussion and writing activities and evaluation for this activity.

The Photo Analysis Worksheets, also found in Appendix 2 should be used to analyze the pictures from Nicodemus, Kansas. Students should use the computer lab and the Library of Congress American Memory web site so that students can see the original pictures along with what remains of Nicodemus, Kansas today. Students should also be reminded to enlarge the pictures on their computers for better analysis. These worksheets may also be used as the basis of discussion and writing activities as well as evaluation for this activity.

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Notes

- (1) Hine, Darlene Clark, *The African American Odyssey*
- (2) Painter, Nell Irvin, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction*

- (3) Taylor, Quintard, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West 1528-1990*
- (4) Taylor, Quintard, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West 1528-1990*
- (5) Taylor, Quintard, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West 1528-1990*
- (6) UCLA Institute on Primary Resources <http://ipr.ues.gseis.ucla.edu/classroom>
- (7) The University of California, Berkley Library
<http://lib.Berkley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySources.html#definitions>
- (8) Questions taken from Middle Web at <http://middleweb.com/index.html>
- (9) Library of Congress Learning Page www.loc.gov

Appendix 1: Documents and pictures

The following documents and pictures may be found at the Library of Congress in the American Memory Collection. Many of these documents/pictures were found under a search for Nicodemus, Kansas; Hill City, Kansas. Several of the newspaper articles appeared in the African American Experience in Ohio, 1850-1920/ Cleveland Gazette. These documents were included in this paper to provide information on the sources available none of these copies however, are clear enough for distribution, as is, to students.

Appendix 2: Using Primary Source Documents

www.archives.gov

I. Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

- Newspaper
- Letter
- Patent
- Memorandum
- Map
- Telegram
- Press release
- Report
 - Advertisement
 - Congressional record
 - Census report
 - Other

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

- Interesting letterhead
- Handwritten
- Typed
- Seals
 - Notations
 - "RECEIVED" stamp
 - Other

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:

POSITION (TITLE):

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

B. Why do you think this document was written?

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

II. Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation

- A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.**

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

People

Objects

Activities

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Step 3. Questions

A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

B. Where could you find answers to them

Designed and developed by the Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408.

Page URL:

http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/analysis_worksheets/photo.htm

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Page URL:

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866-272-6272

Standards

In the curriculum unit on the Western Migration of African Americans the Citizenship standards emphasized will be standard 1 and 8. Standard one states that all students should demonstrate an understanding of major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of Pennsylvania, the United States and other nations, and describe the patterns of historical development. Standard eight in Citizenship states that students should demonstrate their ability to get along with others. Along with the Citizenship standards this unit also emphasizes the Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening Standard 1 and 8. Standard one states that all students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies. Standard states that students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe. The last standard addressed in this unit is standard nine from the Science and Technology standards which states that all students demonstrate basic computer literacy, including word processing, software applications, and the ability to access the global information infrastructure, using current technology