

## Leaving the Plantation

The year is 1866, and you are a 17-year-old African American teenager, living on a cotton plantation in Youngton, Mississippi. The Civil War has just ended, and slavery is now abolished.

You gained freedom after the U.S. Congress and President Lincoln passed the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment. Even though you are “free”, the White people in your hometown still treat you like a second-class citizen. After searching for months, you can’t find any opportunities to work and make money in Youngton, and recently, the police have started arresting Black men without jobs. Instead of going to jail, they are forced to work on chain gangs. You need to find a job soon.

You are a skilled farmer, and you are good at caring for horses. Many of your friends and family members are going to stay on the plantation and work as sharecroppers. They would prefer to have better opportunities, but it is dangerous for Black people to travel in the South. The Ku Klux Klan has been terrorizing the area, and several murders have been reported.

After talking to your fellow freedmen, you have three possible options for the next chapter of your life. These are your choices:

- 1) **Youngton, Mississippi-** Stay on the plantation and work as a sharecropper. Your parents, aunts and uncles are going to stay on the plantation. They have lived all of their lives here, and they know the dangers that exist for Black people traveling in the South.
- 2) **St. Louis, Missouri-** Make your way west to Vicksburg, which is located on the Mississippi River. You will work to save up money for a riverboat ticket; then you’ll make your way up the river to the city of St. Louis. You heard that many freedmen have moved there to start a new life. You could find a job caring for horses.
- 3) **Nicodemus, Kansas-** Make your way to St. Louis, and then take a train to the Western Frontier, aka the Wild West. There is a town in Kansas called Nicodemus, and it was founded by freedmen. You can’t believe that there’s really a town run by freedmen, but it’s true! You will be living in a small farming community on the Great Plains. It’s a 9-hour train ride to the nearest city.

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