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Building: Leola Grade 6

Date:

Domain Score

Domain:	Focus	Content	Organization	Style	Conventions
1st Scorer					
2nd Scorer					
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After slavery was abolished treatment of African Americans got a lot worse, but as they were freed blacks rose to the challenge and started a new life for themselves against all of the odds. Some of these groups were called Exodusters. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed by Abraham Lincoln and slaves were rightfully free, but southerners didn't exactly agree. Because of this argument the Civil War breaks out and eventually the Union Army wins and slavery is abolished. However the treatment of blacks only gets worse as people take advantage of and kill the former slaves. Then, blacks start to realize that there is an escape to the harsh treatment and debt, and that escape is moving west, thanks to the Homesteading Act of 1862. Now that the former slaves had a place to go and believe in, they formed groups like the Exodusters and set out to claim a new life. Some were not as motivated though, as the harsh treatment of blacks scared them into submission.

The treatment of African Americans worsened after slavery was abolished in 1865. People in the south were not happy that slaves had been freed and now they were taking it out on them. They formed horrible groups such as the Ku Klux Klan who terrorized the former slaves into being afraid to leave or break the unfair rules. Cheap Jim Crow laws were passed that made a African American's life even more depressing. They couldn't vote because of a two dollar voting fee and a literacy test. Also, segregation was legalized in the south and life became a constant struggle. While all of this was going on, the African Americans couldn't even move out of the area to a safer place in the country, they were in constant debt. Since they were sharecroppers, they were perpetually in debt because they constantly needed loans of seeds, mules, and tools to support their families. In return though, they had to give back a huge percentage of their crops to the landowners. Life in the south for a black African American was an unfair and terrible experience, but the homestead act became a symbol of inspiration and hope for many people.

The Homesteading act helped many African Americans start a new life in the west where they could be treated equally to how hard they worked and not by the color of their skin. The act came to pass because the U.S. government wanted to settle the land to the west, and when Abraham Lincoln signed it in 1862, it became law. Exodusters were a group of black homesteaders who left the south and migrated west to Kansas to get out of debt and

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unfair judgement. The rules of homesteading were that you had to be 21 years or older, you've never bore arms on the U.S. government, and to own it you had to farm and build a house on it for five years. Also, you had to pay a eighteen dollar filing fee. People bought the land in 160 acre grids using the Rectangular Survey System. However, before slaves were released in 1865, people were having land rushes. This happened when people raced for the best land for the cheapest prices. So, when slaves were released in 1865, all of the good farming land was gone. However getting the land was easy compared to staying long enough to own it. Homesteading was hard for black and white settlers. In states like Oklahoma and Kansas where there were no trees, they would resort to building earthen homes out of sod bricks. Of course most people never would have made it out there if it weren't for great black leaders like Benjamin Singleton.

Benjamin Singleton, also known as Pap, read the bible and was determined that he would bring his people out of slavery just like Moses did with the Israelites. The only problem was that people didn't have enough money to make the trip and start a new life. He tried many times to buy land from the government, but most attempts failed, and if he did get the land then there were too many people and the small settlement was overwhelmed and abandoned. One day he managed to buy part of a Cherokee Native American Reservation in Kansas, but instead of settling in the safe west, he came back to the south to lead his people out. He made handbills that advertised a free state where people would be treated equally, and to make it affordable, he only required a one dollar payment in twenty-five cent intervals. Now, with the shared money he brought his people out of the harsh treatment and laws of the south, and into a new world where they could own their own land. This exodus of black homesteaders started new, all black towns like Dunlap and Nicodemus. Leaders like Benjamin Singleton helped pave the way for black settlements to prosper in the years to come.

Once the Exodusters made the trip to Kansas, a few years later their towns rose up from the ground and prospered. When they got to their destination they broke ground with shovels and spades and whatever other tools they could find. At the time Nicodemus owned only three horses, one man even plowed with a milk cow. When new settlements white neighbors saw how hard they were working they lent them a team of oxen and a plow. The settlement started with a small community of eight hundred homesteaders and ended as a town of about eight thousand. When they were in the south people treated the black citizens as if they couldn't work hard or get an education, but their success was apparent to all in the years to come. The new town of Dunlap even built a school. Nicodemus and Dunlap are living proof that blacks can work hard under the roughest conditions and should be treated equally.

Black African American citizens helped build the United States that we prize today. In the frontier, they stepped up to do any of the jobs that white people did. They became exodusters, homesteaders, teacher, nurses wranglers, miners, trappers, mountain men, hotel keepers, and scouts. They were also cowboys, the symbol of independence in the west.

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People should respect blacks just as much as anybody else. Black African Americans became exodusters and freed themselves from injustice in the south.