

Interlude

Bullwhip Days

Marster neber 'low he slaves to go to chu'ch. Dey hab big holes out in de fiel's dey git down in and pray. Dey done dat way 'cause de white folks didn' want 'em to pray. Dey uster pray for freedom. I dunno how dey larn to pray, 'cause dey warn't no preachers come roun' to teach 'em. I reckon de Lawd jis'mek 'em know how to pray.

Ellen Butler (p. 190)

I've heard 'em pray for freedom. I thought it was foolishness, then, but the old-time folks always felt they was to be free. It must have been something 'vealed unto 'em. Back then, if they'd catch you writing, they would break you if they had to cut off your finger, but still the old-time folks knew they would be free. It must have been 'vealed unto 'em.

Anonymous (p. 190)

I met many runaway slaves. Some was trying to get north and fight for de freeing of they people. Others was jes' runnin' 'way 'cause dey could. Many of dem didn't had no idea where dey was goin', and told of havin' good masters. But, one and all, dey had a good strong notion to see what it was like to own your own body.

Edward Lycurgas (p. 302)

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What did my passengers look like? I can't tell you any more about it than you can, and you wasn't there. (...) I never saw my passengers. It would have to be the "black nights" of the moon when I would carry them, and I would meet them out in the open or in a house without a single light. The only way I knew who they were was to ask them, "What you say?" And they would answer, "Menare." I don't know what that word meant – it came from the Bible. I only know that that was the password I used, and all of them that I took over told it to me before I took them. (...)

I never got anything from a single one of the people I carried over the river to freedom. I didn't want anything. After I had made a few trips I got to like it, and even though I could have been free any night myself, I figgered I wasn't gettin' along so bad, so I would stay on Mr. Tabb's place and help the others get free. I did it for four years. (...)

The bigger ones [of my children] don't care so much about hearin' it now, but the little ones never get tired of hearin' how their grandpa brought Emancipation to loads of slaves he could touch and feel, but never could see.

Arnold Gragson (pp. 266-268)