

LIFE ON THE HOME FRONT

African Americans, North and South

Three African Americans on a street corner in Philadelphia are discussing their life in the North during the war.

Northern African American #1 - Can you believe it? It's been one year since Mr. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and now we have our brothers in arms wearing the Union blue. Surely the glory of their fight on the battlefield will help us become equal at home!

Northern African American #2 - Don't be so sure, my friend. We have been gaining rights up here in the North, but only on paper. This country still thinks that blacks and whites are a race apart, in the North and the South. Some Democrats have been telling white men not to sign up for the war, cause they would only be hurting their kind by fighting to free slaves. They're saying that the free slaves will come up North here and take away jobs. They're saying that it's all right to fight for Uncle Sam, but not for Uncle Sambo.

Southern African American - I have to tell you the truth, my friends – I'm one of those freed slaves. I had to leave the South once I heard about Mr. Lincoln freeing us slaves. I ran to the first federal I seen. It was like coming to the Kingdom of Heaven, I do say.

Northern African American #1 - How did you find out about the Proclamation?

Southern African American - Well, my master done told me, but other slaves heard it through the slave grapevine. It took a long time to feel free, tho – I must of celebrated about ten times before I finally my way up here to the big city of the North.

Northern African American #2 - Well, my southern friend, it has been bad up here. Here in Philadelphia, we got our white schools and colored schools, our white churches and colored churches, our white Christianity and our colored Christianity.

Northern African American #1 - You speak the truth! We blacks are oppressed everywhere in the slavery cursed land. We live apart from the whites in most places, and they have no idea what our lives are like. We got two different worlds up here.

Southern African American - All I wants to do is find a good job and make me some real honest money. I know some factory owner will give me work – and I'll work for less just to prove myself

Northern African American #1 - Watch yourself! I've heard of awful stories about what happens to blacks who take jobs from whites.

Northern African American #2 - Them workers, mostly union workers, get all crazy and turn in to a nasty mob. They attack factories, find black houses and burn em good, and gang up on our brothers. You just be careful.

Southern African American - No matter how bad it is up here, it can't be no worse than what we had in the South. After living my life under the whip, I take my chances up here. I can get my family a house, and get my kids into a school. That schoolin', its' the next best thing to freedom. And all the while, I can know that there are so many more like me, leaving the South and making it harder and harder for those boys to fight their war.

Northern African American #1 – And we can show our worth as men by helping win this war. What do you say we all sign up for Mr. Lincoln's army. It's time to ante up and kick in like men!

