

Voices of Freedom Series presented by
Voices from the Earth



Puzzle At Port Royal:
*A Radical Rehearsal for the
Racial and Economic
Reconstruction of the South*

By Ilene Evans, Connie Rice, Jamal Koram, and Joey Madia

2011

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Directors Notes:

My intent of telling these stories is to express the valor of the African American Troops and those who supported them. They were making war on Slavery. Their accomplishments exceeded everyone's expectations – everyone's but their own- they knew what they could achieve.

The Program starts with the back story of Robert Smalls (a chronological choice) in that he represented the level of commitment, the willingness to sacrifice, prepare, and take advantage of the opportunity to live in freedom with his family that existed among those at Port Royal. Risking everything, he escaped bondage before the creation of any policy that established the fate and status of people escaping to Union lines. His back story demonstrates a love of community, a shared yearning, and the willingness to sacrifice all for it.

I like the wording of Stephen Ash toward the end of his book, *Firebrand of Liberty: The Story of Two Black Regiments that Changed the Course of the Civil War*. The success of the USCT in the occupation of Jacksonville, Florida, and along the St. John's River changed the attitude of Lincoln, his cabinet, and the public who read the extensive news reports on the behavior of the Black soldiers and their manly dignity in battle. It was the sustained event which Lincoln used to support his moving forward with the active recruitment of Black soldiers and in blacks attempt to fight for their own freedom and restore the Union. Ash wrote, "A soldier from the 8th Maine made this observation the day after his regiment returned to Port Royal from Jacksonville: I have thought that the negroes would not make good soldiers and so did most of the men in this regt, but in the several skirmishes they have had with the rebels they have won the praises of all and the rebels are as afraid of them as they would be of so any tigers" (p. 198).

According to Ash, up until the March 1863 St. John's expedition conducted by the 33rd and 34th USCT (led by Higginson and Montgomery), "there was no sustained combat operation against Confederate forces by Black troops." And, "...nor had any captured and held an important Southern Town; ...nor had any taken prisoners; nor had any gone into action side by side with White troops" (p. 199).

Ash lists several newspapers and articles which changed the mind of skeptics about Black recruits and the deeper call of freedom for all, particularly the *Washington Evening Star* and *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. The day their articles on the St. Johns expedition appeared, Lincoln's cabinet decided to proceed with the full scale enlistment of blacks (p. 200).

Character Sketches

Frances Harper (1825-1911)

A poet and essayist, Frances Ellen Watkins was born in Baltimore in 1825. Orphaned at the age of three, Watkins went to live with her aunt and uncle, Harriet and William Watkins. She compiled her first collection of poems, *Forest Leaves*, in 1845. In 1860, Watkins married Fenton Harper and settled on a farm in Ohio. During her four-year marriage, she gave up lecturing in order to raise their daughter, Mary, and Fenton's three children from an earlier marriage. She watched the progress of the Port Royal experiment from her home and wrote extensively. After her husband's death saddled her with a large debt, Harper resumed lecturing for the antislavery cause, teaching, and writing poetry and novels in order to support herself and her family.

Robert Smalls (1839-1916)

Robert Smalls was a self-liberated man who planned, and succeeded, in spirited away his family on a Confederate Steam ship which was being operated as an armed transport and dispatch vessel. In April of 1862, he impersonated a captain and stole a Confederate ship, sent a rowboat to pick up waiting family members, sailed past five Confederate forts, and eventually turned the ship over to Union troops blockading the area. Smalls stood proudly at the Planter's wheel. Only seven miles of water lay between the ship and the chance of freedom. With precision and amazing courage, he navigated past the Confederate forts in the harbor and steered the ship toward the safety of the Union fleet. Any miscalculation would have been deadly, but Smalls brought the ship and its cargo safely from Charleston Harbor to Port Royal in Union controlled territory. Smalls continued to stay active in the U.S. Navy and later engaged in politics to protect the gains made by the war. He became the first African-American captain of a United States vessel and later served in both the South Carolina legislature and the United States Congress.

Harriet Tubman (1820 – 1913)

Tubman was born into slavery in Maryland but escaped through the Underground Railroad in 1849. She became the most famous leader of that network, aiding slaves in their escape to free states and Canada. When the Civil War erupted her underground railroad experiences and her knowledge of covert operations made her an invaluable resource to Federal officers. Tubman was called by Massachusetts Governor Andrew to serve as a liaison between the troops and the newly freed people and to add her expertise of reconnaissance and strategy to that of the Union cause. She served as a spy, nurse, scout, and guide for Union troops and was present at the ill-fated assault on Fort Wagner by the 54th Massachusetts in South Carolina.

Seth Rogers (1823-1893)

Journalists accompanied the regiment called the First South Carolina Volunteers – the first true regiment of Men of African Descent formed of men who had once been enslaved. These men were at the center of the media's attention. Would they fight? Could they fight? Would they be loyal to the Union? Given the chance, Black men were determined to prove they deserved the Union's trust; determined to prove their manhood and humanity. *Harpers Weekly* ran drawings for the curious readers as did the New York papers, the *Christian Recorder*, *Washington Evening Star*, *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. Seth Rogers kept letters as well as a journal of his first year with the Black soldiers and their triumphs. Rogers was an ardent abolitionist who served as chief surgeon of his regiment at the request of his longtime friend Col. Higginson. Neither of these men had spent much time around African Americans, but their interaction with blacks

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during the Port Royal experiment led both of the men to recognize that Black folks were intensely human, deeply religious, and most worthy of their claim to equality. Seth Rogers and Thomas Wentworth Higginson were officers for the first Black regiment to be assembled of men who sought liberty behind Union lines—the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, later renamed the 33rd USCT.

Luis Emilio (1844-1918)

Captain Luis Emilio was one of the officers for the 54th Massachusetts, a regiment formed by abolitionist Governor John Andrews. It was comprised mostly of free, Northern, African American men, many of who were literate and running their own businesses in the North. With President Lincoln's permission, Andrews created an official company although it could not legally join the war effort until March of 1863 when Lincoln and Congress officially called for the enlistment of Black soldiers with the promise of equal wages and treatment. Emilio served the length of the war with the 54th regiment and fought side by side with Black soldiers. Emilio spoke against race hatred, kept detailed accounts, and compiled the accounts into a memoir that told the story of a Brave Black Regiment. The film *Glory* is based on the actions of the 54th Massachusetts during the Civil War.

Lyrics for Musical Selections for - Puzzle at Port Royal

I'm On My Way to Canaan Land

I'm On My Way to Canaan Land
I'm On My Way to Canaan Land
I'm On My Way to Canaan Land
Oh, Lord, I'm on my way.

If you won't go – don't hinder me.
If you won't go – don't hinder me.
If you won't go – don't hinder me.
Oh, Lord, I'm on my way.

Deep River

Deep river, my home is over Jordan
Deep river, Lord,
I want to cross over into campground.

Lord, I Don't Want to Die in the Storm

Lord, I don't want to die in the storm.
Lord, I don't want to die in the storm.
Let the wind blow east,
Let the wind blow west,
Lord, I don't want to die in the storm.

Well, my Mother she died in the storm,
Well, my Mother she died in the storm,
Let the wind blow east,
Let the wind blow west,
Lord, I don't want to die in the storm.

Battle Cry for Freedom

We will welcome to our number the loyal true and
brave;
Shouting the Battle cry of Freedom and
Although he may be poor, he will never be a slave.
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

Chorus:

It's the Union forever, Hurrah, Boys Hurrah.
Down with the traitors and up with the Star
As we Rally round the flag boys rally once again
Shouting the Battle cry of Freedom.

So we're springing to the call from the East and
from the West,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom,

And we'll hurl the rebel crew from the land we love
the best
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

Chorus:

It's the Union forever, Hurrah, Boys Hurrah.
Down with the traitors and up with the Star
As we Rally round the flag boys rally once again
Shouting the Battle cry of Freedom

We are springing to the call of our brothers gone
before,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom,
And we'll fill the vacant ranks with a million
freeman more,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

Chorus:

It's the Union forever, Hurrah, Boys Hurrah.
Down with the traitors and up with the Star
As we Rally round the flag boys rally once again
Shouting the Battle cry of Freedom

Marching Along

The Army is gathering from near and from far;
The trumpet is sounding the call for the war;
Higginson's our leader, he's gallant and strong;
We'll gird on our armor and be marching along.

Chorus:

Marching along, we are marching along.
Gird on the armor and be marching along;
Higginson's our leader, he's gallant and strong'
For God and for country we are marching along.

The foe is before us in battle array,
But let us not waver or turn from the way;
The Lord is our strength and the Union's our song;
With courage and faith we are marching along.

Chorus:

Marching along, we are marching along.
Gird on the armor and be marching along;
Higginson's our leader, he's gallant and strong'
For God and for country we are marching along.

Our Wives and our children we leave in your care,

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We feel you will help them with sorrow to bear;
'Tis hard thus to part, but we hope 'twont be long,
We'll keep up our heart as we're marching along.

Chorus:
Marching along, we are marching along.
Gird on the armor and be marching along;
Higginson's our leader, he's gallant and strong'
For God and for country we are marching along

Battle Hymn of the Republic First Arkansas Marching Song

Father Abraham has spoken and the message has
been sent,
The prison doors he opened, and out the prisoners
went,
To join the sable Army of the "African Descent"
As we go marching on.

Glory, glory hallelujah,
Glory, glory hallelujah,
Glory, glory hallelujah,
As we go marching on.

See, there above the center, where the flag is waving
bright,
We are going out of slavery; we're bound for
freedom's light;
We mean to show Jeff Davis how the Africans can
fight,
As we go marching on!

We have done with hoeing cotton, we have done
with hoeing corn,
We are colored Yankee soldiers , now, as sure as
you are born.

When the masters hear us yelling, they'll think its
Gabriel's horn
As we go marching on.

Oh, We're the bully soldiers of the First of
Arkansas,
We are fighting for the Union, we are fighting for
the law,
We can hit a rebel further than a white man ever
saw,
As we go marching on.

I'm Coming Up The Rough Side of the Mountain

I'm coming up the rough side of the mountain
I must hold to god – His powerful hand.
I'm coming up on the rough side of the mountain.
I'm doing my best to make it in.

There is a Balm in Gilead

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.

Stand Still Jordan

Stand still Jordan.
Stand still Jordan
Stand still Jordan
Lord, I won't stand still.

We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder

We are climbing Jacob's Ladder
We are climbing Jacob's Ladder
We are climbing Jacob's Ladder
Soldiers of the Cross.

Every round goes higher – higher.
Every round goes higher – higher.
Every round goes higher – higher.
Soldiers of the Cross

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Music – Track 1 on CD - *I'm On My Way to Canaan Land* - (All sing until Duck Under)

Cue 1 on Duck Under after first verse

Historian/Narrator: (Connie Rice)

In the seat of Southern Aristocracy, amid wealth, and fortune, and privilege, a community sustained by slavery became the battleground for the most radical of American ideals. In 1861, the Union General Thomas W. Sherman seized the islands along the coast of South Carolina to use as a base for Union military operations. Southern whites quickly fled the islands leaving thousands of people who had been enslaved behind. People who had been held captive were eager to find safety and shelter with the Union army, flocked to the islands in search of freedom. Under these conditions, government officials and missionary societies joined together to conduct an experiment—to create a model for the new society that would emerge at the end of the Civil War.

Port Royal was a symbol of hope—a dream—for the creation of a society and nation based on genuine freedom where each and every soul truly was equal before God and man. At Port Royal, men and women negotiated the politics of both race and gender. Social barriers were broken—old patterns of subservience for blacks shattered amid new opportunities that instilled independence, responsibility, and leadership; and women who came to nurse, to teach, and to comfort transcended the boundaries of gender and domesticity and found empowerment.

Mitchelville, built on the former Drayton Plantation, became the heart of a program known as “The Port Royal Experiment.” The “experiment” became a major media event. Black family life and loyalty were on trial, as were Black soldiers and their manhood. The government sought to answer two questions:

1. Could blacks work and achieve success outside of bondage?
2. Could blacks fight for their freedom and contribute to the war effort?

The entire country scrutinized and assessed the “experiment.” Journalists embedded throughout the community and among the Black troops recorded their successes in articles that altered public opinion and political policy. The black community at Port Royal demonstrated its ability to learn, to organize, to work . . . to succeed; and America’s sable warriors proved their ability to fight. The men and women of Port Royal, both black and white, worked together in a common cause and achieved success. Bigotry between the races eased . . . at least in the Sea Islands and on the battlefield. For four short years, America had a glimpse of what it was supposed to be; what it could be.

How unique in American history was the experiment at Port Royal? How significant was it? And what can we learn from it today? By listening carefully to the voices of the past, perhaps we can understand the puzzle that was Port Royal.

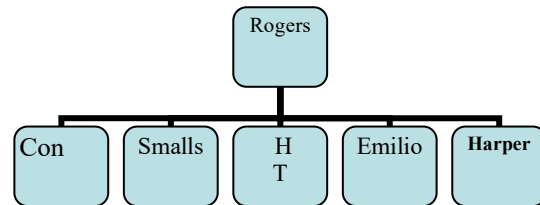
Music Cue 2 Track 2 Vocal Musical underscore: *Deep River Humm* verse *Humming* – verse *fade out*

Tonight we will hear from people who lived through this pivotal time— from those who witnessed the turmoil of the Civil War firsthand –and either participated in the experiment at Port Royal or watched it from afar. African American poet Frances Harper actively followed the

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events of the Civil War, and the progress at Port Royal, from her home in Ohio. As a writer, teacher, and fervent abolitionist, Harper's poetry reflects the feelings and hopes of black Americans during the war. Ladies and gentlemen, Ms. Francis Harper:

First Stage Picture



Frances Harper Reads:

Bury Me in a Free Land By Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

**Make me a grave where'er you will,
In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill;
Make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves.**

**I could not rest if around my grave
I heard the steps of a trembling slave;
His shadow above my silent tomb
Would make it a place of fearful gloom.**

**I could not rest if I heard the tread
Of a coffle gang to the shambles led,
And the mother's shriek of wild despair
Rise like a curse on the trembling air.**

**I could not sleep if I saw the lash
Drinking her blood at each fearful gash,
And I saw her babes torn from her
breast,
Like trembling doves from their parent
nest.**

**I'd shudder and start if I heard the bay
Of bloodhounds seizing their human**

**prey,
And I heard the captive plead in vain
As they bound afresh his galling chain.**

**If I saw young girls from their mother's
arms
Bartered and sold for their youthful
charms,
My eye would flash with a mournful
flame,
My death-paled cheek grow red with
shame.**

**I would sleep, dear friends, where bloated
might
Can rob no man of his dearest right;
My rest shall be calm in any grave
Where none can call his brother a slave.**

**I ask no monument, proud and high,
To arrest the gaze of the passers-by;
All that my yearning spirit craves,
Is bury me not in a land of slaves.**

Music: Deep River concludes

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Music: Cue 3 on Disc Duck Under after first verse Music – Lord, I Don’t Want to Die in the Storm - (All sing then Duck Under)

Narrator/Historian: Robert Smalls had no intention of dying a slave; nor of being buried in a slave land. In the early morning hours of May 13, 1862, Smalls commandeered a steamer called the Planter, loaded with armaments for the rebel forts, his wife Hannah, children Elizabeth Lydia and Robert Jr., and twelve other captives, and sailed past five Confederate forts. With skilled precision and amazing courage, he navigated past five Confederate forts to a new life in freedom. Newspaper editorials citing Smalls’ gallantry shattered stereotypes about the capability of blacks. An editorial in the *New York Daily Tribune* said, “Is he not also a man - and is he not fit for freedom, since he made such a hazardous dash to gain it? . . .

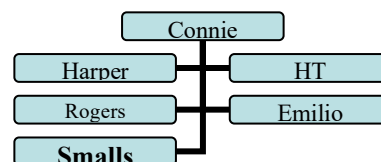
Smalls was more than just “fit” for freedom. He became the First Black Captain of a U.S. Vessel, a S.C. State Legislator, a Major General in the S.C. Militia, and a Five-term U.S. Congressman.

Below the bust of Smalls at his grave is this quote:

*My race needs no special defense,
for the past history of them in this country
proves them to be the equal of any people anywhere.
All they need is an equal chance in the battle of life.*

Listen closely as Robert Smalls recalls his battle for freedom and equality.

Music End **Cue 3**



Second Stage Picture

Robert Smalls Story by Baba Jamal Koram

An equal chance - in the battle of life, that’s all anybody needs...right ? right? (Audience response) Right! I wasn’t a bad boy, but I was kind of privileged in an ear of bondage. My mother, Lydia, she was keeper of the house, the McKee’s house. And I would do things around the house, but my mother always made it clear to me that we were not free. She would tell me, “Boy, I’ll send you out in the yard where you belong,” cause that’s where the other Africans were – out there working hard - while I was in the house. “Bout 13 years old my mother convinced McKee to send me on up to Charleston cuz I was getting’ a little to brash, a little too

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bold, I becoming a little too outspoken. And she feared that something would happen to me. So they send me on up to Charleston and I, I worked in a hotel and I was a waiter. and uh, It was aristocracy there , you know and foreign visitors there. And uh, I learned a lot. But then I got kinda tired of that and I convinced them that I should be lighting street lamps. So, during the day I'd clean the soot out of the lamps and at evening time I would lite the lamps - but my love, - my deep love was always near the water. I loved to swim. So I'd go down to the docks and uh, Old man Fergusson saw me down there one time and he said that he would make me a stevedore. And so I started loading the ships and pretty soon I was a foreman and pretty soon after that I was behind the wheel of the Planter. The Planter was a pretty big ship, about 150 feet long and it could hold about a thousand four hundred bales of cotton and uh during war time it could hold about a thousand soldiers. And they called me a wheelman because they didn't dignify black men with the title of pilot. But I was really what? ...A pilot.

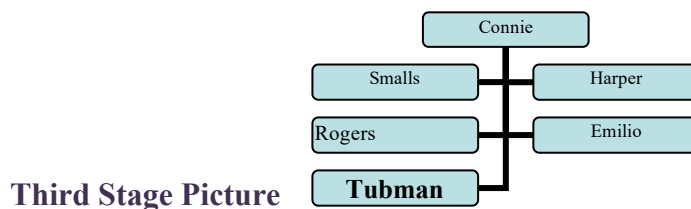
One day me and some of the crew - we were on the ship and one of em said, Robert you know if you put on that straw hat like our captain, you 'bout the same build, you could pass for our captain. Maybe one day you could ride this ship all the way past those forts and we'd be free. And I said wait a minute, don't talk too loud. Cause if you serious about that we need to talk. So we arranged to meet at my place on East Bay street in Charleston. It was a Sunday in April, I do recall that. And we met and the plan was made. And they said, "We don't want to get bogged down in details, we just want to wait for your call. But we do know what we want to do. And we do know who should come." Well, as it turned out an opportunity presented itself about a month later. You see we were loading up about 200 pounds of ammo and some other supplies and what not we were going to take to the forts in Charleston Harbor. You do recall Sumter don't cha? *(wait for audience response)* Yeah! Well, that's the time the Confederacy took over Fort Sumter, but the Union had a blockade right outside Charleston Harbor. 7 miles from Charleston. We knew that if we could get past those forts and get to that blockade, we would be free. So we kinda took our time loading that stuff on the ship that day. Because this would make a nice gift for the Union soldiers if we could get thru. By the time we finished loading, it was late - and the captain and the first mate, his engineer. The White folks - they left the ship. They said, "We'll get and early start in the morning, Robert. Make sure, Y'all ready." Yes, sir, Captain! Yes, sir," Well, they left. And the plans begin. Oh we, we said, we should leave about 2 o'clock. Word got to my wife, Hannah, My wife Hanna, she had my baby boy and my little girl and John Smalls wife, she was going to come and they had two friends, Lavonia was one of em, I forget the other girl's name, But we wanted them to wait for us on the north Warf, right out there in Charleston Harbor. So plan was for me to put on the Captain's hat - for me to put on the Captain's coat - and put it down and we would leave early enough so that the light wouldn't hit us before we could pass Fort Sumter, but late enough so we could see our way through. Well, they couldn't see my color in the dark when the hat was down. 3 O'clock we fired up the engines. The dock watcher the one who was in charge of the dock as he said he heard the ship but as he said later , I thought they were just going about their business as usual. At 3 O'clock in the morning. Well,

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we started up and we went around to the North Warf. And we picked up the women and children. Put them down in the hold of the ship. And then we started. Before we passed Castle Pinckney, a little outside, a little fort. Things were going good. I was wheeling the ship. I had on the hat, I had on the coat. And den we passed, uh, Fort Ripley. Ripley, between Ripley and the coast there was some batteries of guns and what not. And we had to make sure that they didn't fire on us and the folks and so I signaled the right signals and I got the right response so we kept going. Past Fort Johnson. Fort Johnson was the one we were really worried about outside of Fort Sumter. Cuz they had some of the big guns in that for and the tide was coming in as it was getting later and later in the morning and the tide was startin to come in and I had more difficulty getting thru different channels and uh, the guys were saying uh, why don't we speed up a little bit. I said. "No, let's take out time." I signaled Fort Johnson. And we got thru just one more. The only problem was it was getting light outside. They might have a chance to detect my color. So I told one of the crew to take the wheel and I stood in the window of the pilot house and I held myself like old captain would hold hisself. And as we passed Fort Sumter, I gave the signal, but there was no response. Folk got nervous. And it just flashed through my mind a conversation I had with my wife, Hannah, before we left. I said, "Hannah, do you want to go thru with this?" She said, "Robert, where you go, I go. Where you die, I die."

The response came back from Fort Sumter. We rolled past a little ways. Just outside of gun range. I called down, and I said, "Fire it up! Throw anything you can throw in there in that boiler! Fire it up! We got to Full Speed ahead!" And the smoke started coming out the stack. And the ship started moving forward and one of the guards at Fort Sumter – uh - Fort Moultrie they did - they saw it - and they sent out an alert, they did and Fort Moultrie fired their guns and , Sumter heard it but they knew we were out of their range. Made it on in. 7 miles to freedom. Made it on in to the Union blockade. Took down the South Carolina Flag and the Confederate Flag and threw up a white sheet. One of Hannah's best sheets, too. Got us free. Got us free. Lot of good things happened to me. I fought in 18 battles. And as you heard, I was this and that, but thou it all, I just wanted to do one thing. That was to make my mamma proud of me. Hope she was. That's my story.

Music Cue: *Battle Cry of Freedom (HT sings leads- others join-All sing Duck Under)*



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Narrator/Historian:

One of the people at the Heart of the war on slavery and the Port Royal Experiment was the legendary Harriet Tubman. She brought vital information to the Union generals in the Department of the South. and was the only woman in American military history to plan and execute an armed expedition against enemy forces. During the war she worked as a cook, a nurse, a scout, a soldier, a spy, and a laundress. Her knowledge of and respect for humanity drove her actions. A shining example of how to live life as though fear did not exist, Tubman is vital to the understanding of our nation's fight for civil rights. Harriet Tubman said, "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world." She knew it was true; she saw it happen.

Harriet Tubman Monologue:

Music: *Battle Cry for Freedom (Harriet Singing others join, duck under)*

We will welcome to our number the loyal true and brave
Shouting the Battle cry of Freedom and
And we'll hurl the Rebel crew from the Land we love the best.
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

That's the only flag that ever offered my people anything.

Lieutenant Taylor Say: "de **old** flag neber did wave quite right. There was something wrong about it, - there wasn't any star in it for the black man. Perhaps there was in those made in de North; but, when they got down here, the sun was so hot, we couldn't see it. But, since the war it's all right. The black man has his star: it is the big one in the middle.²"

Out of 34 stars on the flag one of them should be for the Black man. (*Pause*) – 35 now! West Virginia! (*Surprised – look down*) You must be the new nurses. We can always use more ready, willing and able, hands. You were looking for Harriet? ---- Moses?? Well, some folks 'roun here call me that. Welcome! I jus come from General Hunter, He told' me keep watch out for you - so I could hep you fin yo way. General Hunter is the Commander of all the Union forces down here for the Department of the South. Florida, Georgia, South Carolina----- Welcome to Fort Beauregard, Beaufort, South Carolina.

Oh that song?

Got to keep a song at the ready - best weapon you got! – We got more than one enemy to fight and ain't all of em wearing a uniform. Song work de sufferin and sorrow. Song a Shield - for the Pain and Death all around - You want to bring up your nursing? You best keep a song in your heart and at the ready. For you and dem boys .

We come down from New York by ship by orders of Governor Andrew and General Hunter. What a sight it all was - umh, umh, umh, when I first come to South Carolina Sea Islands. Fields of cotton----fields of rice, deserted. All hushed----still ...
All the nice planted rows crisscrossed with weeds and not a person in sight.

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Chickens and ducks and feasting in the fields and not a man or dog to stop them.

As we were sailing along on the boat a young man asked me where'd everyone gone.

I told him I'd heard they just up and run when our soldiers come, hiding out in the back country somewhere, waiting for the war to be over.

He said, " But where are all the slaves?"

I said , "well, I guess when they heard about the soldiers coming, they just dropped dey hoes and left the fields, masters said, "Run and hide with us. Yankees'll get you.Seel ya to Cuba!" They run, alright, dey run de other direction! Thousands of 'em pouring into Beaufort and Hilton Head everyday... begging to join the Lincoln Army

I am trying to find places for those able to work, and provide for the others as best I can.

Among the other duties which I have, is that of looking after the Hospital and the newly freed slaves. The army calls them contraband of war. They do not like that name – contraband – they prefer Freedman - They Not property anymore!!!

I have now been absent two years almost, and have just got letters from my friends in Auburn, urging me to come home. My father and mother are old and in feeble health, and need my care and attention. I do hope the good people there will not allow them to suffer, and I do not believe they will. But I do not see how I am to leave at present the very important work to be done here. Most of them coming from the mainland are destitute, almost naked.

SFX : Drums drumming Music: *First of Arkansas Version of the Battle Hymn*

Hear Dat!? De Colored Soldiers Drilling again! Our men gotta be ready when their time come. They been given more than their share of fatigue duty. But now been proved in battle! Ummhm. The First of Arkansas!

54th of Massachusetts, the 55th, the 27th of South Carolina, The regiments is getting in order, General Say - 160 all told. 1st SC Volunteers – dat's Col. Higginson, 2nd SC - dat's Col. Montgomery--- 140 infantry --- 13 Artillery ----7 cavalry – I hear tell that out o' de 980 in the 54th regiment – nearly 500 can read – 300 can read and write. The soldiers come from every walk of life - 46 different trades - 25 different states, from Canada – from Africa. Even now they are paid as laborers and not as soldiers \$7/ month instead of \$15. The 54th and 55th, the 33rd - have refused pay, all pay – until it is equal. Just as they was promised. I must stand with my men. I make all my money from selling root beer and pies and gingerbread and laundry – like all the other women do. How can I accept the \$15 month pay or the rations from the commissary? I turned down my allotment too. I will not betray their trust – I worked too hard to get it.

The General has cleared the way so they may farm the abandoned plantations as their own, [*aside*] So as to lighten the burden on the government as much as possible]; while at the same time they learn to respect themselves by making their own living. We have made a wash house, a

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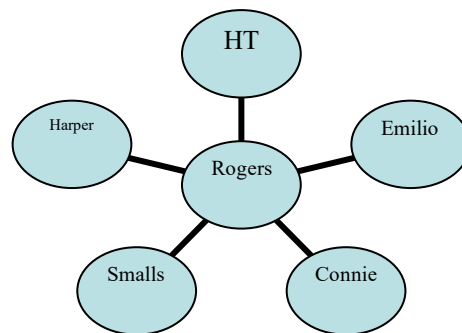
cook house , and a school. The freedwomen work together and I see dem make gloves, stockings and raise food for their men in the Union Army. They spin yarn in a tin basin and use reeds they cut from the swamps to knit the yarn.”³

They manage the plantations dat de slave-owners abandoned - while they men’s fighting. These women on der own – raise and clean and spin de cotton, care for livestock, and grow vegetables for their own use and for sale. At night they attend the schools for freedmen. So many are learning to read and write. And now dey can write letters to their men encouraging them to be brave and true. Dat they got love - gonna have something to come home to.

Music: *We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder* (– make a Jacob’s ladder string figure)

The surgeon warned me when I first come-- he say we have a little of just bout everything and a whole lot of nothin. He was off just a bit, (*knowing look*) more like a whole lot of everything, and a whole lot of nothin. We got plenty of gun wounds, starvation, malaria, sand flies, fleas, lice, black flies, biting flies, dysentery, births, deaths, smallpox, and green flies ... and did I say flies? Oh, and dirt aplenty! But **no drugs**, no bandages, no muslin and no help in sight. What I don’t make myself, beg or borrow - we don’t have. *Evry donation go to use. – Got to go see my men. (We are climbing Jacob’s Ladder... singing) exit to upstage Left.*

Music – *Marching Along* - (*All sing Duck Under*)



Fourth Stage Picture

Narrator/Historian:

There were people like Seth Rogers who had an unshakeable belief in the Port Royal Experiment and what it could mean to the nation Rogers became the chief surgeon of the 1st South Carolina Volunteer regiment, the first regiment formed with black men who had escaped from slavery into Union lines, at the request of his longtime friend Col. Higginson. Rogers came to understand the men in his regiment—their quest for freedom and equality, and their unswerving loyalty to a nation that had failed to live up to its promise of “liberty and justice for all.” Dr. Seth Rogers

Seth Rogers, M.D. Surgeon Monologue: (*Walks DC opens medical Bag – unfolds bloody apron*)

I have had cause to look back at my year of service with the United States Colored Troops as their physician and healer.

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In November of 1862, I arrived in Port Royal, SC. I volunteered to serve in the US Army as a surgeon for the black soldiers of the 1st SC Volunteers. I had been practicing in Worcester, Massachusetts, proprietor and resident doctor of the Worcester Hydropathic Institution. It was at the invitation of Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Commander of the regiment, that I found a way to serve our shared passions as abolitionists and as Unitarians. We had been close friends for years and shared a deep commitment to bringing an end to slavery. I, the son of a Quaker farmer from Vermont, had been an abolitionist since childhood.

When I arrived at Camp Saxton, at Beaufort, South Carolina, in December 1862 - 700 Black men from Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, were in training under Colonel Higginson. I moved into my tent at the encampment of the 1st SC Volunteers on the grounds of what had - before the war - been the J. J. Smith Plantation. I steadily became acquainted with these very remarkable men whose lives in slavery and whose heroism in getting out of it deepened my faith in Negro character and intellect. Once liberated and trained, and with a rifle in their hands, Black men were suddenly fighting to free their own families and to liberate all persons of African descent.

I saw my first action January of '63 on the foray up the St. Mary's river to liberate and occupy Jacksonville, FL. Some believe that the Jacksonville campaign was what convinced President Lincoln to issue the order "that committed the U.S. Army to the massive enlistment of black troops." For our Colonel Higginson, that decision was of great importance both for the successful prosecution of the war ...and for the fate of African Americans after the war ended. The Colonel said, "Till the blacks were armed, there was no guarantee of their freedom. It was their demeanor under arms that shamed the nation into recognizing them as men."

When I sat down at evening it always seemed as if there could be but one subject to write upon, - the music of these religious soldiers, - who sing and pray steadily from supper time till "taps" at 8:30 - interrupted only by roll call at eight. The chaplain's pagoda-like school house was the scene of earnest prayers and hymns at evening. I am sure the President was remembered more faithfully and gratefully in prayer by these Christian soldiers than by any other regiment in the army. It was one thing for a chaplain to pray for him, but quite another for the soldiers to kneel and implore blessings on his head and divine guidance for the officers placed over them, such prayers ought to make us true to them.

I examined from sixty to eighty men every morning and made prescriptions for those who needed them. Doing this and visiting those in the hospital, usually kept me busy from breakfast to dinner; after that my assistants took care of everybody till next morning. My afternoons were almost equally busy contriving ways to keep the soldiers from getting sick and, improving my hospital. The hospital was the upper floor of an old cotton gin building. I had the machinery moved and bedsteads made, beds made and filled with the dry, coarse grass that the soldiers brought on their heads from the plains. We had to make everything as we went. We had no such thing as pillows or sheets, but we had plenty of blankets, and the knapsacks answered nicely for pillows. Dr. Hawks had already got a good fire- place in the room and made everything as systematic, and almost as comfortable, as in any Boston hospital. . . .

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For a short time, I was kept busy in trying to discover the causes of such an excess of pleurisy and pneumonia in our camp, as compared with white regiments. I lost many an hour's sleep listening to the coughing of the soldiers in the night and trying to contrive plans to meet the causes. In a climate so damp - and with change of temperature so great between midday and midnight, I steadily felt the importance of some means by which the soldier's (A) tents could, with their clothing, be more effectually dried and purified than is ordinarily done by the sun. To have a fire in a tent 7 x 8 for four men, without fireplace, stove or even an opening in the top, did not seem quite feasible, but we tried in James's and one other company, an experiment which proved to be a success.

Remembering the antiseptic influence of wood smoke, and also the primitive cabins from which many of our people came, we had fires built in the centre of the tents, the floor boards in the middle being removed and a hole being dug in the sand for the fuel. The soldiers enjoyed this scheme. After the smoke ceased, the beds of coals made the tents seem very cozy. The Colonel was sure to favor every hygienic measure that offered any good to the soldiers. A few days experiment with two companies settled the question by simply comparing the sick lists.

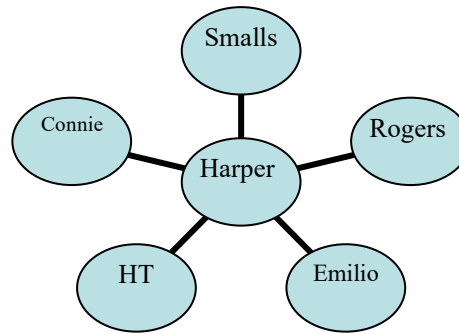
One night, while I was dreaming of a magnificent storm on the ocean, I was awakened by a pitiful outcry - as if one was being murdered in the rear of my tent. Several voices joined and then the sentinel screamed for the corporal of the guard, and finally it all ended in a low laugh. I put my pistol back under my head and went back to sleep again. Later, I learned that the Commissary Serg't had the nightmare and two or three others caught the fright and fancied Secesh after them.

Before breakfast one morning I stood on the shore and listened to the John Brown hymn, sung by a hundred of our recruits, as they came up the river on the steamer "Boston," from St. Augustine, Fla. Our Col. Billings went down for them and we received into our regiment all but five. Another morning, when the wind finally came from the N.W. and the sky was beautiful in the extreme, like that of early summer when the clouds are full of promise... At that moment... the camp resounded with the same John Brown hymn, sung as no white regiment can sing it, so full of harmony.

I know you all think me over enthusiastic about these people, but every one of you would be equally so, if you had been there. Every day deepened my conviction that if we were true to the Black soldiers, they would be true to us. The Col. arrived at the same conclusion. When I thought of their long suffering at the hands of the whites, and then of their readiness to forgive, I felt reverence for the race that I did not know before coming among them. You need not fancy that I find them perfect: it had not been my fortune to find mortals of that type - even in Worcester - but I do - even now, find them, as a people, religious, kind hearted, forgiving and truth loving.

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Music- Battle Hymn of the Republic -1st Arkansas Version- (All sing Duck Under)



Fifth Stage Picture

Narrator/Historian:

The People who participated in the Port Royal Experiment saw what few Americans ever saw firsthand: the fidelity of Black soldiers and the determination of a race to establish a life in freedom. Captain Luis Emilio witnessed that history as it unfolded. What he saw and heard as a soldier in the 54th Massachusetts and a participant in the experiment in Reconstruction that occurred at Port Royal altered, not only his own view of African Americans, but of America itself. Luis Emilio is here tonight to discuss his role in the 54th, the bravery and loyalty of the U.S. Colored Troops, and the history of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment. . Welcome Captain Emilio.

Luis Emilio: The story of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment (abbreviated)

By Joey Madia

Thank you, Dr. Rice, for that fine introduction.

[To audience] Ladies and gentlemen, it is both a privilege and an honor to talk with you this evening on the occasion of the publication of my book, *A Brave Black Regiment*, in this, the Year of our Lord, 1891. My publishers are having trouble getting it reviewed because of the prejudice at work in these United States, so I would ask that you all to do your part to spread the word after leaving here tonight.

I was an 18-year-old sergeant serving in North Carolina when I received orders to return home to join the officers' complement of a newly formed colored regiment, and within a few months I found myself Captain of Company E of the 54th Massachusetts.

Now, The 54th was formed by Governor Andrew just weeks after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Frederick Douglass and many others were actively recruiting colored Men - able-bodied Black men—including two of Douglass' sons—to join regiments in 20 different states—notices were placed in more than 100 journals and papers throughout the land.

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The places of recruitment, now they had to be kept secret, however, since there had been looting and burning and rioting in New York at the thought of Blacks entering the war. So the men were put on rail cars in the dead of night - under cover of darkness - with tickets purchased by agents and recruiters in order to protect them. All effort was made to choose the very best of men—we soon had 439 able-bodied recruits for training, from our own state and many others. Free northern men of color, many of whom could read and write – who owned their own businesses.

And yet, there were many in the North thought these men couldn't be disciplined or trained and ultimately they wouldn't fight. But the men of the 54th were anxious to prove them wrong, and they soon got their chance. In early June of 1863 we were put on steamboats and taken to Port Royal, South Carolina.

Now at the start of this recruitment, Black men were promised equal pay and treatment with white soldiers if they joined the Union Army. All the notices had it in writing as part of the recruitment package. But when time came for the first muster for pay, the men were offered \$10 less \$3 for clothing rather than the \$13 promised. On principal that offer was refused and justice sought by our fine commander, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. Appeal after appeal was made to no end. The men would not let their necessities, nor those of their families back home, outweigh their self-respect, however, and it took 26 months to adjust the situation through congressional bureaucracy and the outstanding valor of the United States Colored Troops.

I am certain you have heard of the second assault on Fort Wagner, which took place on July the 18th. Due to our regiment's courage in the first assault a few days before, Colonel Shaw was asked to place the 54th at the head of the column.

I remember it as though it were yesterday. The sights. The sounds. The smells.

We marched with bayonets affixed, advancing over three quarters of a mile of sand while the fog rolled in and the cannon fired mingled with the thunder. The water reached our knees as we first received musket fire at 200 yards. Then came the double-quick. Although the musket and cannon fire steadily increased, our men reached the parapet in good order, even as Lt. Col. Hallowell went down with a wound to the groin. We had yet to fire a shot. Colonel Shaw, raising his sword high into the air, shouted "Forward 54th!" and was promptly killed by a shot through the heart. We went over the wall and engaged in fierce hand to hand combat until we were finally repelled down that long and bloody slope.

Seven captains senior to myself lay wounded, leaving me in command of the regiment, to gather the men and reform the lines around our battered, bloodied flag.

We didn't take the Fort that night. Instead it took a 58-day siege to pry the Rebels loose.

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As for Captain Shaw, he was robbed of his sash and sword and buried in a mass grave. An officer in the US Army... That was the South's punishment for him for daring to lead a colored regiment.

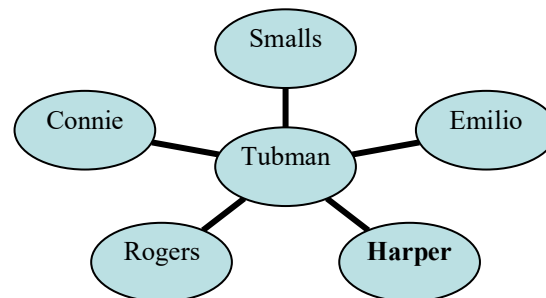
You see, a few years before, Jefferson Davis let it be known that any Blacks captured with arms were to be returned to their states of origin, while the Confederate Congress declared that white officers involved with colored troops would be deemed as inciting servile insurrection and if captured would be put to death or otherwise punished at their Court's discretion.

As time passed, treatment of our men began to improve, again due to their valor on the field. There was Olustee, Florida; James Island where we fought from an exposed position in 110 degree heat; 150 wounded at the Battle of Honey Hill; Potter's Raid; our entrance into the city of Charleston, where we found 10,000 hungry Negroes who had been abandoned when the citizens fled; and Boykin's Mills, April the 18th, the last fight for our regiment and one of the last of the war.

By the time they reached Boston for final pay and discharge in early September, the brave men and officers of the 54th Massachusetts had secured their place in history and proven with blood that colored troops were capable of serving their country with distinction and honor.

Let us never forget what they accomplished, and what is still left for us to do, both in their names and in the names of all men who meet with prejudice both on the battlefield and off.

Music: I'm coming Up The Rough Side of the Mountain – (all sing first line – then hum)



Sixth Stage Picture

Narrator/Historian:

While Captain Emilio witnessed the events at Port Royal, Frances Harper was forced to view the progress of Port Royal from the outside. Despite her absence, she was intensely aware of the impact its success or failure could have for the entire race. For Harper, the liberation of enslaved Africans was the basis as well as the most significant result of the Civil War. A free woman of color, Francis Harper was a published poet and travelling lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society prior to the war. Following the war, she focused on the moral uplift and education of the

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newly freed slaves, attacked racism and the oppression of women, and advocated political activism as a means of securing legal and civil rights. In her writings, Harper called for full human development—black and white, male and female.

Frances Harper Monologue: (steps up to lectern to speak carrying book and papers)

I feel I am something of a novice upon this platform. Born of a race whose inheritance has been outrage and wrong, most of my life had been spent in battling against those wrongs. ..

To honor the African American Soldiers killed at Fort Wagner, SC.

“The Massachusetts Fifty Fourth”

Where storms of earth were sweeping, Wildly through the darkened sky, Stood the bold but fated column, Brave to do, to dare, and die... Bearers of a high commission To break each other's chain; With hearts aglow for freedom, They bore the toil and pain... Oh! Not in vain those heroes fell, Amid those hours of fearful strife; Each dying heart poured out a balm To heal the wounded nation's life. And from the soil drenched with their blood, The fairest flowers of peace shall bloom;	And history cull rich laurels there, To deck each martyr hero's tomb... It shall flash through coming ages, It shall light the distant years; And eyes now dim with sorrow Shall be brighter through their tears... It shall gild the gloomy prison Darkened by the nation's crime, Where the dumb and patient millions Wait the better-coming time... Soon the mists and murky shadows Shall be fringed with crimson light, And the glorious dawn of freedom Break refulgent on the sight.
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We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. You tried that in the case of the negro. You pressed him down for two centuries; and in so doing you crippled the moral strength and paralyzed the spiritual energies of the white men of the country. When the hands of the black were fettered, white men were deprived of the liberty of speech and the freedom of the press. Society cannot afford to neglect the enlightenment of any class of its members. At the South, the legislation of the country was in behalf of the rich slaveholders, while the poor white man was neglected.

This grand and glorious revolution which has commenced, will fail to reach its climax of success, until throughout the length and breadth of the American Republic, the nation shall be so color-blind, as to know no man by the color of his skin or the curl of his hair. It will then have no privileged class, trampling upon outraging the unprivileged classes, but will be then one great privileged nation, whose privilege will be to produce the loftiest manhood and womanhood that humanity can attain.

In advocating the cause of the colored man, since the Dred Scott decision, I have sometimes said I thought the nation had touched bottom. But let me tell you there is a depth of infamy lower than that. It is when the nation, standing upon the threshold of a great peril, reached out its hands to a feebler race, and asked that race to help it, and when the peril was over, said, You are good enough for soldiers, but not good enough for citizens. When Judge Taney said that he men of my race had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, he had not seen the bones of the black man bleaching outside of Richmond. He had not seen the thinned ranks and the thickened graves of the Louisiana Second, a regiment which went into battle nine hundred strong, and came out with three hundred. He had not stood at Olustee and seen defeat and disaster crushing down the pride of our banner, until words was brought to Col. Hallowell, “The day is lost; go in and save it;” and black men stood in the gap, beat back the enemy, and saved your army.* (Applause.)

Tell me if the whole world of literature... can equal the music of these words:- “I grant you full, broad, and unconditional freedom”... the Democrats tell us this war has been a failure to restore the Union. Why, that failure has been a grand success. The Union of that past, thank God, is gone. Darkened by the shadow of a million crimes, it has sunk beneath the weight of its own guilt, and now we stand upon the threshold of a new era – an era whose horizon is gilded with promise, and flushed with hope. The Union a failure? Go ask the hundred thousand freedmen in Maryland if the war be a failure, and let them point you to the homes which no soul-driver invades by law, where the crack of the whip, and the shrieks of tortured women, and groans of outraged men, no longer rise as swift witnesses to God against the terrible wrongs of slavery... Just a little while since the American flag to the flying bondman was an ensign of bondage; now it has become a symbol of protection and freedom.”

A new more viable Union, with freed people as a part of it, would be put in to place.

We have a woman in our country who has received the name of “Moses,” not by lying about it, but by acting out (applause)—a woman who has gone down into the Egypt of slavery and brought out hundreds of our people into liberty. The last time I saw that woman, her hands were swollen. That woman who had led one of Montgomery’s most successful expeditions, who was brave enough and secretive enough to act as a scout for the American army, had her hands all swollen from a conflict with a brutal conductor, who undertook to eject her from her place. That woman, whose courage and bravery won a recognition from our army and from every black man in the land, is excluded from every thoroughfare of travel. (Applause.) National defeats have national gains...Slavery has brought us down to the dust of death, and it was poetic justice that we should have a general who would burrow in the mud, and muffle the thunders of his cannon before the wooden guns of Manassas.

Songs for the People by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Let me make the songs for the people,
Songs for the old and young;

Songs to stir like a battle-cry
Wherever they are sung.

Not for the clashing of sabres,
For carnage nor for strife;
But songs to thrill the hearts of men
With more abundant life.

Let me make the songs for the weary,
Amid life's fever and fret,
Till hearts shall relax their tension,
And careworn brows forget.

Let me sing for little children,
Before their footsteps stray,
Sweet anthems of love and duty,
To float o'er life's highway.

I would sing for the poor and aged,
When shadows dim their sight;
Of the bright and restful mansions,
Where there shall be no night.

Our world, so worn and weary,
Needs music, pure and strong,
To hush the jangle and discords
Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.

Music to soothe all its sorrow,
Till war and crime shall cease;
And the hearts of men grown tender
Girdle the world with peace.

Music: Balm in Gilead - Harper leads the song, other join – invite audience
(Bow –All Storytellers)