

FREE AT LAST Decision Chart

In 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which freed former slaves. In much of the South news of freedom did not apply until after April of 1865 when the Civil War ended. On June 19, 1865 (Juneteenth) Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston and announced the news of emancipation. This news spread quickly to Texans by word of mouth and proclamations nailed to trees and buildings.

Former slave Felix Haywood (in an oral history) described his first responses to freedom: “Everybody went wild. We all felt like heroes and nobody had made us that way but ourselves. We were free. Just like that, we were free. It didn’t seem to make the whites mad, either. They went right on giving us food just the same. Nobody took our homes, but right off colored folks started on the move. They seemed to want to get closer to freedom, so they knew what it was like - like it was a place or a city.

We knew freedom was on us, but we didn’t know what was to come with it. We thought we were going to get rich like the white folks. We thought we were going to be richer than the white folks, because we were stronger and knew how to work, and the whites didn’t and we didn’t have to work for them anymore. But it didn’t turn out that way. We soon found that freedom could make folks proud but it didn’t make them rich or give them food to eat.”

GROUP TASK

YOU AND YOUR GROUP MEMBERS REPRESENT A NEWLY FREED SLAVE FAMILY. YOU HAVE BEEN LIVING ON A PLANTATION IN EAST TEXAS FOR YEARS AND NOW MUST DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE.

1. **LIST** the skills you have.
2. **LIST** your limitations.
3. **BRAINSTORM** a list of options for what you might do now that you are free.
4. **PRIORITIZE** them in order from best to least desirable and write them in the spaces provided on the group task sheet.
5. **EVALUATE** each option by listing the good and bad points of each.
6. **MAKE A DECISION** about what you and your family would do in 1865. **WRITE** your decision in the space provided.

You and your group must make a decision soon.

Names of Group Members _____ Date _____ Period _____

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LIST THE SKILLS YOU WOULD HAVE:

LIST ANY LIMITATIONS YOU WOULD HAVE:

IDEA	GOOD POINTS	BAD POINTS
WHAT WE DECIDED TO DO:		