

5

THE OTHER SIDE OF FREEDOM**Destitution, Disease, and Dependency
among Freedwomen and Their Children
during and after the Civil War****Jim Downs**

He found her lying in a ditch a few miles away from a Union camp in Augusta, Georgia. The war had been over for almost a year, yet she lay there in the dirt under the hot August sun as if she were a recent casualty from battle. By the end of war, she certainly was free, but the slow and often unorganized reconstruction of the South did not offer her a clear road to freedom. Instead, as the Bureau agent who discovered her explained, she had been going "from pillar to post and had fallen on her knees."¹

After finding her lying in the dirt, the Bureau agent brought her to the Freedmen's Hospital in Augusta, Georgia. There, a Bureau physician examined her body and diagnosed her as blind, and then later concurred that her blindness must have resulted from syphilis. While it is difficult to determine the validity of the doctor's diagnosis—as many medical professionals in the nineteenth century associated disease, particularly venereal disease, with social circumstance and morality—questions concerning her condition nonetheless remain. How long she was there before the agent discovered her? How and when did she escape from slavery? If she was, in fact, suffering from syphilis, how was she treated?

While these questions cannot get answered, they challenge our understanding of the Civil War. When we envision the Civil War mainly as soldiers fighting on a battlefield and generals strategizing ways to capture their enemies on the Mississippi, it is difficult to see the freedwoman lying in an abandoned field. Yet, when we imagine the war as a crisis in

which the lines were not clearly demarcated between blue and gray; when we recognize that disease killed more soldiers than combat; when we realize that newly emancipated slaves entered an environment pillaged by disease, death, and destruction, we can see her more clearly.²

During the Civil War and Reconstruction, there were many women, like her, anonymous and alone, young and old, and often destitute and sick, suffering from the outcomes of war and the abrupt transition to free labor.³ In Orangeburg, South Carolina, a woman was found lying on cotton bales and suffering from rheumatic fever. It is no wonder that she was lying on burlap-wrapped cotton, as rheumatic fever often causes one's joints to flare up, making walking, even standing upright, a challenge. Lying on the canvas, alone in the middle of a cotton field, she was eventually discovered by a Bureau agent, who concluded she was "feverish" and "unable to work."⁴ Miles away from the cotton plantations of South Carolina, in the bustling nation's capital, the story was the same: a Bureau physician found an elderly freedwoman in a hovel suffering from starvation.⁵ Government reports, correspondences, and letters like these tell of the hundreds of freedwomen who did not qualify for labor and begged for rations. Some, who had children, congregated around Bureau offices and hospitals hoping to gain a cup of beans, pork, if they were lucky, and, at least, a blanket or a pair of shoes to keep them warm.⁶

Their condition resulted from the wartime policy of employing only the "able-bodied" men. During the Civil War, as thousands of slaves fled to Union lines, General Benjamin F. Butler declared that ex-slaves could enter Union camps as "contraband." And, as historian Barbara J. Fields notes, "contraband" was a term that "left unsettled whether or not such slaves became free," a term that "covered the uncertainty" of their social and legal position.⁷ The military continued to capitalize on this uncertainty by enlisting former enslaved men as laborers and then restricting families—particularly unemployed freedwomen and children—to overcrowded and unsanitary camps, depriving them of not only economic and political independence but also adequate clothing, food, and shelter. As a reporter for the *Atlantic Monthly* discovered, the employment of men by the military had unfortunate consequences for freedwomen and children. Addressing the issue of what would happen to freedmen's families after the military transported their husbands and fathers to camps in need of laborers, he wrote: "Here was a new question, and a grave one, on which the government had not yet developed a policy."⁸

Without a policy that provided freedwomen and children with clothing, food, and shelter, thousands women and children, from the eastern

shores of Maryland to the southern tip of Georgia and to the banks of the Mississippi, suffered in the transition from slavery to freedom.⁹ In January 1862, *Harpers Weekly* reported that over fifteen hundred contraband had arrived at Fortress Monroe, of whom roughly six hundred were women and children without clothing.¹⁰ Drawing from the soldiers' worn and unwanted uniforms, the military provided coats, shoes, and hats for some of the former enslaved men but lacked clothing for other men, as well as *all* the women and children. Similarly, the *Freedmen's Record* later reported, "clothing is their most pressing need, especially for women and children, who cannot wear the cast-off garments of soldiers."¹¹

To make matters worse, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act on July 17, 1862, which formalized Butler's informal practice of allowing fugitive slaves to enter Union camps in exchange for their labor. This policy to employ the "able-bodied" referred only to men, not women.¹² While former enslaved women certainly worked in Union camps as washwomen, cooks, and domestics, there was no policy that provided for their employment; their labor was often impromptu service, neither regulated nor systematized.¹³ Women instead were to gain rations and shelter, and to receive medical care through the support of their husbands' or fathers' employment.¹⁴

The Union Army, however, barely had adequate resources and supplies to care for their own men, let alone the thousands of freedwomen and children who were in need of support. In the hierarchy of the Union Army, preference was given to the white troops. Black regiments, who were next to receive support, often suffered—as some historians have noted—from insufficient rations, medicine, or other deprivations common to the region in which they were stationed; yet they, at least, registered on the military's radar. The government and the military had a vested interest in the health and well-being of these soldiers, and they assigned medical inspectors, doctors, and nurses to their camps—even if it was less than that was appropriated to white regiments.¹⁵ Trailing behind the Union army were freedwomen and children, who in the military hierarchy were considered nothing more than mere "contraband." According to army officials, women and children harassed Union officers and were a hindrance and a burden to the military's efforts. Their medical needs, in turn, were virtually ignored.¹⁶

Some military officials attempted to solve this problem by taxing able-bodied men's labor to support women and children.¹⁷ An order from the quartermaster general to the secretary of war stated

that a large number of colored men are employed in this District [of Columbia] and in Alexandria as teamsters and laborers at the rate of twenty five dollars per month. In view of the fact that the Government is supporting several hundred women and children of the same class, who are unable to find employment and also furnished medical care, support and attendance, to the sick and helpless, the Secretary directs that you cause five dollars per month to be deducted from the pay of the said color teamsters and laborers . . . to be paid over to a Commissioner who will expend the fund thus accruing for the benefit of the women and children, and as a hospital fund for the sick among the men from whom it is derived.¹⁸

The program established in Alexandria for freedwomen and children led to the establishment of General Order 46, which provided support for women and children throughout the South. According to General Order 46,

the family of each colored soldier so enlisted and mustered so long as he shall remain in the service and behave well, shall be furnished suitable subsistence, under the direction of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs, or their Assistants; and each soldier shall be furnished with a certificate of subsistence for his family, as soon as he is mustered.¹⁹

Despite the promise of such support, this policy, nonetheless, failed, since the federal government did not provide enlisted soldiers with their due pay.

The failure to provide adequate support for freedwomen and children impelled many black soldiers to protest the government's mistreatment of their families. Using their newly minted status as soldiers, black men testified in affidavits and filed complaints regarding the poor and sickly condition of freedwomen and children during the war. Their public denunciations against the ways in which the military mistreated their families received national attention, attracting the support of Northern newspapers and benevolent organizations. As a Boston newspaper reported, "the wives of the men are, they say, often refused to almshouses for their color and are reduced to degradation that drives the husbands almost crazy."²⁰

In an affidavit submitted to his superiors (later published in the *New York Tribune*), Joseph Miller of Company I of the 124th U.S. Colored

Infantry, stationed at Camp Nelson in Kentucky, testified to the dire and sickly condition of his family, who had followed him to Union lines from the Kentucky plantation where they were enslaved. Once entering the Union camp to enlist in the army, Miller claimed that Edward B. W. Restieaux, his captain, granted him permission for his wife and four children to live in a tent within the limits of the camp. On the evening of November 22, 1864, however, his wife and children were approached by a mounted guard, who ordered them to vacate the premises by early the next morning. Since his seven-year-old son was recovering from an illness and the family had no place to go, they stayed overnight. Abruptly woken by a mounted guard on the freezing morning of November 23, Miller's family was ordered to leave. Miller described the scene in his affidavit:

I was certain that it would kill my sick child to take him out in the cold. I told the man in charge of the guard that it would be the death of my boy. I told him that my wife and children had no place to go. I told him that I was a soldier of the United States. He told me that it did not make a difference; he had orders to take all out of the camp. He told my wife and family if they did not get up in the wagon he would shoot the last one of them. On being thus threatened my wife and children went into the wagon. My wife carried the sick child in her arms. When they left the tent the wind was blowing hard and cold, and having had to leave much of our clothing when we left our master, my wife, with her little ones, was poorly clad. I followed them as far as the lines. I had no knowledge where they were taking them. At night I went in search of my family. I found them in Nicholasville, about six miles from the camp. They were in an old meetinghouse belonging to the colored people. The building was very cold, having only one fire. My wife and children could not get near the fire because of the numbers of colored people huddled together by the soldiers. I found my wife and family shivering with cold and famished with hunger; they had not received a morsel of food the whole day. My boy was dead.²¹

Miller then stated that his boy had died when the family got off the wagon and arrived at the "colored meetinghouse." After spending the night at the boarding house with his family, Miller left the next morning for Camp Nelson, carrying his dead son so he could give him a proper

burial. Making it safely behind Union lines did not protect Miller from the excruciating pain and sadness he must have felt that day. Alone on the cold walk back to Camp Nelson, carrying his son beneath the Kentucky sky, Miller certainly was free, but the federal government's failure to uphold their part of their agreement had devastating effects for him and his family. Where the horizon met the outline of the camp site—where weeks before, the sight of Union troops and blazing bonfires had represented freedom for the Miller family—Miller buried his son. Miller would eventually continue his service in the army, only to be haunted by thoughts of his wife and three remaining children huddling by a fire, hoping to gain a morsel of food to eat.²²

Two weeks after the Miller family's expulsion from the camp, E. D. Townsend, the assistant adjutant general at Camp Nelson, wrote to the quartermaster general in Washington, D.C., telling of the "large number of colored women and children that accumulated at Camp Nelson." He then explained that many of them were the wives of the "colored soldiers and that there will be much suffering among them this winter unless shelters are built and rations issued to them."²³

In addition to the pleas made by black soldiers and sympathetic military officials, Northern benevolent workers serving in the South, mostly as teachers, became major advocates for the development of a policy to meet the health needs of freedwomen and children. As J. C. Maxwell explained to his readers in the *Christian Recorder*, "men best fitted for work followed the army, digging trenches." The freedwomen and children, however, were "obligated to remain in the rear and support themselves." He went on to say that women and children should not be ignored; rather, they "demand in unmistakable language, our immediate concern."²⁴ Alerting his readers to the deplorable condition of freedwomen and children in the postwar South, Maxwell tugged on his readers' middle-class, Christian sensibilities in order to form freedmen's aid societies. He further explained:

There are thousands of them at Fortress Monroe, Hilton Head, Cairo, and other places; and although the Government supplies them with food, they are in want of other necessities that sustain life. Winter is hard by, and they must have blankets and comfortable clothing, or they will perish and die to our utter shame. They are now no longer brutes and chattels, but women and children; and if we do not stretch forth our arms to their relief, the curse is upon our head.²⁵

Advertisements calling for volunteers to travel to the South to help former enslaved women and their children appeared in politically progressive newspapers, like the *Weekly Anglo African* and the *Liberator*. The New England freedmen's aid societies and the more religiously oriented groups, such as the Quakers, also published reports and advertisements in their monthly bulletins.²⁶

Former abolitionists heeded the call and went to the South to help newly emancipated slaves.²⁷ As agents for the freedpeople, they alerted military officials to the needs of freedwomen and children in the camps. Initially, their intervention was met with resistance by military and government officials. In southern Illinois, Laura Haviland, a benevolent worker, became an advocate for a freedwoman who attempted to get medical assistance for her dying son. The captain justified ignoring the woman's appeal because, as he told Haviland, "I don't know whether it is so or not; they get up all sorts of excuses."²⁸ Hours later, Haviland learned that the woman's child had died, and then, on behalf of the woman she approached the Captain to see if the child could receive a proper burial. Recalling, years later, in her diary, what the freedwomen had said to her, Haviland quoted the mother using dialect: "Oh, Missus, it 'pears like I can't leave him so; they leave him here tonight, an' dess wharf-rats are awful. Da eat one dead chile's face all one side off, an' one of its feet was gnawed off. I don't want to leave my chile on di bare groun'."²⁹

Fearing that the government would—as the mother predicted—not properly bury her child and that wharf rats would eat the body of the dead baby, Haviland approached the captain a second time. "What is the differrence," said the captain, "if that child shouldn't be buried this afternoon, or whether wharf-rats eat it or not?" Infuriated by the captain's attitude, Haviland said, "You promised to have it buried this afternoon . . . and I told the poor woman that it was done. . . . I see no other way to hold you to that promise, for I shall meet her on the island, I must report to her." Reproaching Haviland for her sympathetic attitude, the captain told her, "You won't allow such things as these to break your heart, after being in the army a little while and seeing our soldiers buried in a ditch, with no other than a coffin or winding sheet than the soldier's dress."

While the captain ultimately made the necessary arrangements for a coffin to be made for the freedwoman's son, many military officials during the war did not view the conditions of freedwomen and children as different from the conditions endured by Union soldiers. The military understanding of health and sickness as a byproduct of the gritty reality

of war life only further invigorated benevolent associations' claims that they needed to be in the South and serve the freedpeople.

Consequently, benevolent associations established offices throughout the South, starting mostly in major cities and then expanding their efforts to rural locales. Northern white women, from New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, most of whom were abolitionists, arrived in the South under the guise of being teachers, to help improve the conditions of freed slaves. In Lambertville, New Jersey, Sarah Gage learned of the suffering condition of freedmen from her friends in Philadelphia and subsequently organized a Freedmen's Home Relief Association of Lambertville. After a few months of meetings and fundraising, Gage left her small town and traveled to Beaufort, South Carolina, to establish a school and assist the freedpeople.³⁰

As teachers, the military provided benevolent reformers with access to the Union camps and allowed them to interact with the freedpeople—as education, according to federal officials, would provide former slaves with the tools to become independent wage earners. With this access, freedmen's aid societies encouraged these women to investigate the living and health conditions of former slaves. Benevolent women, throughout the South, soon discovered countless freedwomen and children who were being forced to live in abandoned, filthy buildings plagued by disease, suffering from lack of proper nutrition and medical care.³¹

Consequently, these Northern teachers began to advocate for the military to extend relief and provide better living conditions for former slaves. An agent for the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, Julia Wilbur arrived in Alexandria, Virginia, where the small Washington, D.C., suburb had been transformed into a hospital station for Union soldiers. After visiting the former bank, which was converted to a sick ward filled with beds for soldiers, Wilbur then made her way near the "Old Capital Prison," where former slaves, criminals, and vagrants were kept. Overwhelmed by the devastation and sickness of Alexandria, she wrote in her diary that evening: "What a place I have found. How can I stay here? It is too uncomfortable to sit and write."³² Yet, Wilbur did stay in Alexandria and continued to write. Unlike military officials in Alexandria, who not only neglected the condition of former enslaved women and children but also refused to enter their living quarters, Wilbur did not shy away from the overcrowded, disease-ridden places that could "prove contagious and fatal." Instead, she willingly entered them. "I went in to the oldest tenement, I saw," she wrote in her diary. She found "3 women and 13 chil-

dren. . . . Old women lying in damp places." Turning to one of her fellow reformers, she pleaded that they bring bedding to the women "to keep them from sleeping on the ground." Later that day, she returned to the "slave pen."³³ There, "in one room with one window," she discovered "20 women and children, some of them sick." Lying on the bare damp floor, "only few could get near the small fire. . . . I had to leave. . . . It was horrible! I went to other room until I felt sick. I had to leave."³⁴

After Wilbur left the slave pen, she did not allow the images she observed to quickly fade from view. Though still new to Alexandria, she wrote a letter that evening to the provost marshal of Alexandria, asking for barracks to be built for the contraband. Wilbur's call for adequate shelter was in line with nineteenth-century understandings of disease and contagion. Overcrowded living spaces were often equated with sickness. With this understanding, physicians and medical authorities attempted to cure health crises by improving the physical environment in which afflicted people lived. From concerns about proper ventilation to white-washing rooms with lime to encouraging proper hygiene, medical authorities and reformers in the mid-nineteenth century moved away from an understanding of illness as a sign of socioeconomic status and morality.³⁵ Yet the majority of Union physicians and military officers during the Civil War viewed sickness among emancipated slaves as the result of their physiological inferiority and inherent vulnerability to disease.³⁶ As a reporter for the *Nation* observed:

There has been considerable speculation as to the effect of freedom upon the physical condition of the former slave. By many it is thought that his ultimate fate will be that of the Indian, and for this opinion there seems to be some ground. That mortality and disease are largely on the increase cannot be doubted: of this fact I am assured by leading physicians, and the statistics would seem to confirm this statement.³⁷

By investigating the living conditions and then calling for adequate housing, Wilbur refuted the popular theories and understandings about the causes for sickness and disease. She, like a growing number of physicians and reformers, understood sickness in relation to one's environment and, as a result, fought hard to improve the living conditions of freedwomen and children in Alexandria. "Women and children are sick and dying, not for want of necessary for food, but for want of suitable shelter from this cold storm," Wilbur explained in 1862. "Could barracks

be built for them at once so that we could have them move together & a physician and medical stores be provided for them, I think we can get supplies of clothing and bedding from the North, & they can be made comparatively comfortable for the winter."³⁸

Relentlessly advocating for military officials to take seriously her claims about the living and health conditions of freedwomen, Wilbur reminded the provost marshal, the leading government official in Alexandria, that Army generals gave her the right "to act as a matron, visitor, advisor, and instructor to these poor women." She then chided the provost marshal for having done nothing to assist the women and children since she had informally informed them of their suffering condition. "And, as a result," she wrote, "on this wintry morning, I have presumed to appeal to the President of the U.S. on behalf of suffering humanity."³⁹

After learning that Wilbur had written to the president, the provost marshal, who months before had ignored first requests for the construction of new barracks, forwarded Wilbur's request to the military governor of Alexandria. Although Wyman agreed to the construction of barracks because of the "increasing population" of contraband in the town, he only gave authority "to build cheap barracks," in order for the contraband to be "subjected to the necessary supervision and control."⁴⁰

General Heintzelman, who ultimately received these requests, refused to build even temporary barracks because—like many government and military officials during this period—he feared that such places would make the former slaves dependent on the government for support. He argued: "If we build temporary barracks they will soon be filled. Now there are a number of Contrabands in this vicinity, who are supporting themselves. When they learn that the government will feed and shelter them, they will flock to Alexandria."⁴¹ He further stated that the freedmen "would spend their wages, and leave the women and children a tax on the government." Heintzelman's fear that providing women and children with shelter would only incite dependency led to no solution for homeless freedwomen and children. In fact, Heintzelman callously said, "What shall be done with these people, beyond temporary expedients, I have not the time to consider."⁴²

Despite Heintzelman's attitude, Wilbur continued in her fight to attain adequate living quarters for former slaves. After numerous debates between city government and military officials, adequate barracks were finally constructed for freedwomen and their children, four months later in February 1863.⁴³ In the meantime, Wilbur had been joined by Harriet Jacobs, author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, who, with the help of

the New York Society of Friends, provided clothing, money, and medical assistance to support women and children in Alexandria. With the assistance of the New York Friends and her relentless letter-writing campaigns, Wilbur eventually forced military officials to consider more closely the living conditions of freedwomen and their children.⁴⁴

Yet Wilbur's efforts in Alexandria only provided a temporary solution. By the end of the war, the number of newly emancipated slaves stood at four million. If the military's concern for freedwomen and children during the war was abysmal, after the war, they had even less of a stake in the welfare of freedpeople. Military officials wanted to return home and to leave the South to forget the conditions and casualties of war. Benevolent organizations that had been individually organized and separated by seemingly nuanced political and religious ideologies recognized the need to unite to provide organized support for the health conditions of freedwomen and children. At their first annual meeting in 1865, they decided to approach Congress for both financial and administrative support to aid freedpeople.⁴⁵

Thomas Elliot, a U.S. congressman from Massachusetts, agreed to represent their cause and introduced legislation to Congress that would provide assistance to former slaves in their transition from slavery to freedom.⁴⁶ Despite a number of qualms on the congressional floor, Congress ultimately passed a bill on March 3, 1865, that established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau.⁴⁷ This organization, whose main purpose was to assist the freedpeople in their transition from slavery to freedom, offered a number of different services. The Bureau established schools throughout the South; mediated labor disputes between former slaveholders and slaves; and distributed abandoned land. The Medical Division, although ostensibly created to provide medical services to freedmen and white refugees, responded largely to the condition of those who were not employed, namely freedwomen and children.

In short, the Medical Division responded to the effects caused by the sudden and often unorganized transformation of the South into a free labor economy. The federal government's emphasis on the benefits of free labor overlooked the ways in which the creation of this new economic system simultaneously created the category of dependency, referring to those who did not fit into the labor force, namely freedwomen and children.⁴⁸ At the end of the war, military officials transported black men to regions in need of workers, leaving their families without the economic means to support themselves.⁴⁹ This process of literally "carrying off"

able-bodied male laborers to plantations created a crisis of dependency. When the able-bodied men were taken away to work as woodcutters and gravediggers on Craney Island, Virginia, a Northern teacher reporting to the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission described the island as a "Government Poor House," "a desolate and exposed place."⁵⁰

The sudden transition to free labor not only involved Bureau agents literally "carrying off" able-bodied male laborers but also included the ways former slaveholders and Bureau agents drafted employment contracts. Favoring family and kinship networks within freedmen's communities, Bureau agents and planters often negotiated employment contracts with the male heads of household.⁵¹ As part of these networks, freedwomen had the opportunity to withdraw from the labor force and devote their efforts to household duties—including growing food and rearing their children. Or, depending upon their location and the economic condition of their family, they could enter the work force as active participants in the burgeoning sharecropping enterprise.⁵² These freedwomen had the structure and the support of their families to endure both the crises of the emancipation and the challenges of the new free labor system.

Many freedwomen, however, were searching for lost family members, looking for work, or following migration patterns, and, as a result, they were temporarily outside of these kin networks. As a benevolent worker in New Berne, North Carolina, explained to her sponsors in Boston, "where there are men in the family, they get along quite nicely; for they work at the trades, etc. . . . but as often is the case, I find a woman with six or eight children to care for, some of them sick, perhaps, and an old grandmother perfectly unable to take care of herself."⁵³ Without a family association, it was difficult to find employment. An eighteen-year-old freedwoman, whom we only know as "Hannah," was abandoned in a rural part of South Carolina, because the freedpeople with whom she was traveling through the town "were not interested in her."⁵⁴

Despite offering support to displaced white men or women, who were also looking for lost family members and employment, local, state, and charitable institutions systematically denied assistance to dependent freedwomen. Many freedwomen were forced to take refuge in deserted barns or nearby hovels; the *Montgomery Daily Ledger* reported that a freedwoman died in an abandoned dump cart after giving birth to her child. Hours later, the newspaper reported, hogs came along and ate the infant.⁵⁵ Throughout the South, thousands of unemployed freedwomen faced similar, albeit less graphic, conditions.⁵⁶ The *Richmond Dispatch* reported a freedwoman found dead of starvation on the streets of the city.⁵⁷

As freedwomen and children attempted to adjust to the challenges of a free labor economy, smallpox tore throughout the South in 1863–1866, worsening their already vulnerable position. Throughout the war, smallpox plagued both the Confederate and Union armies; due to the constant movement of military forces and the unsanitary conditions of camps, the disease easily spread throughout the South.⁵⁸ Without adequate resources or protection from this virus, freedwomen and children were the most vulnerable to these outbreaks. When smallpox first rolled through the Mississippi valley in the winter of 1863–1864, freedwomen and children perished at higher rates than both black men and white men and women, accounting for roughly 75 deaths a day.⁵⁹ When smallpox made its way north to Richmond, Virginia, in 1866, more freedwomen and children applied for assistance than any other demographic group.⁶⁰ When the epidemic reached Washington, D.C., women and children continued to outnumber any other group in need of vaccination or assistance.⁶¹ As Lucy Chase, a Northern teacher serving in Virginia, reported, “they were dying as they died at Hampton by hundreds and thousands. Every woman will say she lost three or more children.”⁶²

Outbreaks of smallpox, in particular, devastated freedwomen and children because of their migratory conditions and their lack of employment and access to medical treatment. Working as washerwomen, cooks, and domestics offered freedwomen an alternative to the plantation labor force, but in many cases it encouraged their migratory status and subsequently exacerbated their displacement, making them particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of the virus. When the smallpox epidemic hit the area surrounding Raleigh, North Carolina, in February 1866, two freedwomen “walked twenty-two miles” to get rations and support. The unexpected cold weather, combined with the outbreak of smallpox in the state capital, however, depleted the Bureau’s supply reserve. After discovering that even the Bureau office had “only empty barrels and boxes” and “nothing of real service to offer,” the women wept.⁶³

On plantations, like the Butler plantation in Georgia, former slaves could quarantine those suffering from the virus to isolated sick houses or pest homes.⁶⁴ Such measures prevented further infection of the virus, but unemployed freedwomen who were not part of plantation economies were ultimately more vulnerable to the virus.⁶⁵ Beyond quarantine as a defense against the virus, employed former slaves also had the opportunity to receive vaccinations on their plantation. Throughout the postwar South, planters negotiated contracts with freedpeople that stipulated medical care would be provided, but former slaves would be

charged the expense of vaccination or medical treatment.⁶⁶ Although this often proved costly, it provided protection against the virus for those employed.⁶⁷

Without vaccination, many freedpeople relied on homeopathic remedies to ward off the virus. From covering the body with tar to isolating afflicted family members to a remote location, freedpeople devised ways to prevent the virus from spreading within their communities.⁶⁸ The devastation that the smallpox epidemic produced was not, however, limited to only those freedwomen who remained unemployed. In fact, reports indicate that smallpox infected an estimated forty-nine thousand freedpeople from June 1865 to December 1867.⁶⁹ That unemployed freedwomen remained the most infected with the virus reveals the extent to which disparities developed as a result of the adjustment to free labor—which privileged the employment of able-bodied men.

By early 1867, the smallpox epidemic began to dissipate, but the larger economic problems that caused freedwomen to remain most vulnerable to sickness and disease continued. In reports and correspondences among federal authorities, dating from 1865 to 1869, freedwomen outnumbered freedmen in terms of illness. From accounts of venereal disease in North Carolina in 1867 to cases of destitution throughout the postwar South to reports of insanity, Bureau doctors documented that the overwhelming majority of afflicted freedpeople in the South were freedwomen.⁷⁰ Because freedwomen did not easily fit into the new labor force, their illnesses were more conspicuous to Bureau doctors and agents, who traveled throughout the postwar South and reported on the conditions of the freedpeople.

In many, if not all of these reports, freedwomen appear in these records as inhibiting the federal government’s plan to rebuild the economy and organize the labor force. Of the many afflictions reported, cases of insanity among freedwomen best illustrate this point. From reports of “an insane freedwoman” running frantically through the streets of Charleston, South Carolina, to accounts of an “insane colored woman” disturbing the otherwise quiet life of New Berne, North Carolina, Bureau doctors and agents received dozens of requests to take charge of these afflicted freedwomen, who lacked a place in the new economy of free labor.⁷¹ In Columbia, South Carolina, Bureau officials described “a violent insane Negro woman” who had recently arrived in town, while officials in Washington, D.C., referred to one nameless freedwoman as “Dummy.”⁷²

That freedwomen disproportionately outnumbered freedmen throughout the accounts of insanity is by no means coincidental.⁷³ Unlike freedmen, who could have been easily placed into a labor gang and transported

to a plantation, freedwomen, because of their displacement from the labor force, migrated from town to town in search of temporary employment and shelter. Walking under the hot sun, surviving the drama of war and emancipation, and living without subsistence more than likely caused many freedwomen to appear to Bureau agents as unstable.⁷⁴ The dire conditions endured by displaced freedwomen often resulted in medical and government officials perceiving them to be wayward, demented, and, in many cases, insane. In South Carolina, for example, a Bureau physician diagnosed Jeanette Small, a freedwoman living in Charleston, as "idiotic" and suffering from "starvation." In addition, in Washington, D.C., a Bureau agent described Bettie Bell as "blind" and "insane."⁷⁵

While Bureau physicians continued to report on cases of insanity among freedwomen, throughout much of the federal government's records, freedwomen simply appeared as "dependent and destitute." The Freedmen's Bureau attempted to solve this problem by establishing almshouses, modeled after Northern asylums, for destitute freedwomen and orphanages for their children, providing temporary refuge, clothing, and rations. Outside of Washington, D.C., for example, military officials converted a former Union hospital into the Lincoln Hospital for Women. Lincoln Hospital treated freedwomen ranging in ages from fourteen to eighty-two. Doctors diagnosed the women with contagious afflictions, such as fever, smallpox, dysentery, but also noted a handful of cases of freedwomen suffering from blindness, old age, and malnutrition.⁷⁶

The Bureau, however, did not construct these institutions because they adopted a more humanitarian policy toward newly emancipated slaves but rather because the sickly and destitute condition of freedwomen and children threatened the sanctity of the federal government's objective of Reconstruction. Creating separate homes and providing medical assistance for destitute freedwomen facilitated the federal government's objectives of developing a labor force in the South. Once freedwomen and children were literally taken away from the abandoned plantations, forced to leave their makeshift hovels and stick-built homes, the government could then more easily clear the land to grow cotton.

Despite even the economic motivation undergirding the establishment of these almshouses for destitute freedwomen, the Medical Division of the Freedmen's Bureau, during its four-year tenure in the South, only established a few of these homes for destitute women. While freedwomen certainly represented the majority of the patients at the roughly forty hospitals that the Bureau constructed after the war, these institutions were unable to adequately and effectively handle the challenges of

freedwomen's health. Although presented with cases ranging from infant mortality to malnutrition to everyday aches and pains, the Bureau's efforts dealt primarily, if not exclusively, with contagious diseases. Furthermore, the rhetoric of free labor obscured the actual health conditions of freedwomen.

Outside the Bureau hospitals, within the freedpeople's community, former enslaved women who had served as caretakers on plantations attended to freedwomen's medical conditions.⁷⁷ Yet records documenting the private aspect of freedwomen's illnesses within their homes and inside their communities are largely nonexistent. Contagious diseases, like smallpox, or even afflictions such as insanity consistently made their way into government reports and public record, because these disorders produced visible manifestations or gave rise to public health crises. Smallpox created noticeable sores on one's body, while cases of insanity created public outbursts. The visibility of these illnesses simultaneously and unwittingly obscured the private and hidden aspects of freedpeople's health.

To understand the private matters of freedwomen's health requires one to move beyond the public sphere. Inside their homes, freedwomen suffered from the mere exhaustion of the war and the challenges of adjusting to the unfamiliar and new demands of free labor. Visiting and often teaching classes at night, Northern teachers entered into freedpeople's homes and offered a more vivid portrait of their conditions. "In every family there is the languor and weakness of convalescence," wrote teacher Laura Towne from the Sea Islands in 1868, for nearly every individual has been severely ill with fever, and they have not recovered spirits or care for anything.⁷⁸ Towne's description of the actual "spirits" of the freedpeople provides a rare insight into the actual conditions of the freedpeople that was often lost in the Bureau's medical reports, which consisted largely of charts and tables. Visiting a family in Maryland, a Northern teacher reported meeting the mother of the household who was "afflicted with a disease of the spine and suffers constantly from physical pain."⁷⁹

C. E. McKay, a Northern teacher stationed in Baltimore, Maryland, discovered a boardinghouse operated by a freedwoman "when a young colored boy" approached her and announced that "Miss Downs wants you to come see her." Located in an alley in a deserted part of the city, Downs opened her home to destitute children and freedwomen. She also rented out rooms in her home to local boarders, and then used the money, along with some cash she earned as a washerwoman, to buy medicine for the orphans in need. After visiting the boardinghouse, McKay wrote to her Northern association in order to send funds to support Downs's efforts.

"A part of this [Downs's income] has to be expended in medicines for one of the little orphans, who is dropsical, her head and neck swelled to an unnatural size, and her arms and legs slender as pipes."⁸⁰ Downs's boardinghouse represents one of the many efforts within the black community to provide support and medical assistance for those in need. The term *dropsical*, which McKay explained, was a common way nineteenth-century observers described a swelling that was a result of excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue. Such a condition would not alarm medical authorities but certainly elicited the sympathy and concern of those within the freedpeople's communities.

By 1868, freedpeople's communities gained the strength and support to assist freedwomen and children. In the years between slavery and freedom, from roughly 1862 to 1867, disease and the deprivation of war prevented many freedpeople from helping those most in need in their communities. Many freedwomen, as a result, suffered from the unexpected problems of emancipation. Benevolent organizations desperately attempted to respond to these problems by distributing clothes, providing food, and constructing hospitals for those who were set apart as dependent and outside of the labor force. More important, benevolent organizations alerted federal officials to the need for governmental intervention. The federal government's establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau attempted to help freedwomen in the transition from slavery to freedom but failed to solve the larger economic problems that caused their dependency. In fact, Bureau physicians' constant reporting that women and children suffered more from illness than any other demographic group unwittingly suggested that if free labor was not working, it was clearly a result of freedwomen—lying in abandoned fields, disturbing peaceful communities, and, most of all, not working.

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NOTES

1. A. J. Rebus to Surgeon J. W. Lawton, August 13, 1866, Letters Received, Augusta, Georgia, microfilm (hereafter M) 1903, roll (hereafter R) 49, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (hereafter BRFAL), Record Group (hereafter RG) 105, National Archives (hereafter NA).

2. Three out of five men died from disease unrelated to battle during the Civil War; for more information on this, see Paul E. Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861–1865* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas), 1968. Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, *The Black Military Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 633–655. Frank R. Freeman, *Gangrene and Glory: Medical Care during the American Civil War* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998), 221–228.

3. Testimony by a Surgeon at Freedmen's Village, Washington, D.C., January 9, 1864, Freedmen and Southern Society Project, University of Maryland.

4. Henry Root to W. R. Dewitt, September 21, 1865, Orangeburg, S.C., BRFAL, RG 105, e. 2979, Chief Medical Officer, Letters Received, 1865–66.

5. H. N. Howard to O. H. Howard, September 11, 1867, Subordinate Field Offices and Subassistant Commissioner (SubDistrict 1) Register of Letters Received, Washington, D.C., M 1902, R 20, BRFAL, RG 105, NA; James E. Yeatman, "A Report on the Condition of the Freedmen of the Mississippi, Presented to the Western Sanitary Commission" (St. Louis, n.p., 1864), 2–3, and Report of the Western Sanitary Commission for the Year Ending June 1, 1863 (St. Louis, n.p., 1863), 24–25, both Western Sanitary Commission reports, Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS).

6. Brig. General C. C. Washburn to Hon. E. M. Stanton, September 6, 1862, W-1251 1862, Letters Received, RG 107 [(L-18)]; A.A.Q.M.B.O. Carr to Capt. F. S. Winslow, July 24, 1862; Mansfield French to Salmon P. Chase, January 6 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. L. Thomas, Adjutant General, to General Meigs, September 27, 1862, RG 92, Consolidated Quartermaster Files, filed under "Contraband Camps," box 399, NA.

7. Barbara J. Fields, "Who Freed the Slaves?" in *The Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1990), edited by Geoffrey Ward, 178–179.

8. "The Contrabands at Fortress Monroe," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1861, p. 637.

9. For women in Virginia and the Upper South, see Col. George H. Hall to Major James Rainsford, September 18 1863, Unentered Letters Received, ser 2594, Dept. of the MO, RG 393, pt. 1 [C-130]. *Freedom*, ser. 2, doc. 85; Official Records, ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, p. 450. Both are quoted in Ira Berlin, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, *Freedom, Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: The Upper South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 578–579. Testimony of Ladies Contraband Society before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, [December 2, 1863], filed with O-328 1863, Letters Received, ser. 12, RG 94 [K-209], quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 584. For women in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Vicksburg, Mississippi: Yeatman, "A Report on the Condition of the Freedmen of the Mississippi," 2–3, Report of the Western Sanitary Commission for the Year

Ending June 1, 1863 (St. Louis, n.p., 1863), 24–25. Also for women in the Mississippi valley, see Ira Berlin, Thavolia Glymph, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, Leslie S. Rowland, and Julie Saville, *Freedom: The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor; The Lower South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 210, 659, 665, 677–670. *Harper's Weekly*, p. 18, January 11, 1862. For women in North Carolina, see Mrs. C. E. McKay, *Stories of Hospital and Camp* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1876), 167–168.

10. *Harper's Weekly*, January 11, 1862, p. 18.

11. *Freedmen's Record*, February 1865, MHS, 26.

12. While there has been a recent proliferation in the study of women and gender during the Civil War and Reconstruction, historians have not explored the ways the Second Confiscation Act legally established a gender asymmetry through the deployment of the “able-bodied policy.” This policy continued throughout Reconstruction to permit the hiring only of men as laborers. The term *able-bodied* originated in the antebellum North in legal and social discourse surrounding the employment of the urban poor. See Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse* (New York: Basic Books, 1996). For studies of gender during Reconstruction, see Laura Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), Noralee Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Mississippi* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), Leslie Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

13. Maj. General John A. Dix to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, December 13, 1862, D-77 1862, Letters Received Irregular, RG 107 [L-99], and Excerpts from Vincent Colyer to Hon. Rob. Dale Owen, May 25, 1863, filed with O-328 1863, Letters Received, ser. 12, RG 94 [K-84], as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom: The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: The Upper South*, 127, 138–139.

14. Capt. Murray Davis to Col. James A. Hardie, December 3, 1864, Letters Received, ser. 15, RG 159, Freedmen's Village, Washington, D.C. [J-2], Freedmen and Southern Society Project, University of Maryland. Joseph P. Reidy, “Coming from the Shadow of the Past: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom at Freedmen's Village, 1863–1900,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 95, 4 (October 1987): 203–428.

15. Berlin, Reidy, and Rowland, *Black Military Experience*, 633–655; Andrew K. Black, “In the Service of the United States: Comparative Mortality among African-American and White Troops in the Union Army,” *Journal of Negro History* 76, 4 (autumn 1994): 317–333.

16. General Orders, no. 46, Head Quarters, Dept. of Virginia and North Carolina, December 5, 1863, vol. 52, VaNC, General Order Issued, ser. 5078,

Dept. of Virginia and North Carolina and 18th Army Corps, RG 393, pt. 1 [C-3062], as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 174.

17. General Orders, no. 46, Head Quarters, Dept. of Virginia and North Carolina, December 5, 1863, as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 174.

18. Thomas to Meigs, September 27, 1867, quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 270.

19. *Ibid.*, 85–109.

20. Clipping, Edward Wilkinson Kinsley Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University. Edward Wilkinson Kinsley was a major supporter of the enfranchisement of blacks later in the South. During the Civil War, he used his status as a commanding leader in the Colored Regiment to voice the concerns of black soldiers. His letters to his family members express his concern for providing the wives and children of black soldiers with improved assistance.

21. Miller's affidavit was published in the November 28, 1864, issue of the *New York Tribune*; however, this article was found in the Quartermaster's Consolidated Reports, filed under “Negro,” at the National Archives. It seems that the condition of women and children and, in particular, the tragedy that faced the Miller family attracted a great deal of attention. RG 92, box 727, Quartermaster Consolidated File, NA.

22. I have not yet been able to locate Miller's pension file. I read through by the pension lists at the National Archives organized by troop and name and was unable to locate his file, but the date and the filing of the affidavit suggests that he remained on duty for a year.

23. E. D. Townsend to Quartermaster General, December 2, 1864, RG 92, box 72, Quartermaster Consolidated Collections, file 75, filed under “Negroes,” NA.

24. November 6, 1862, *Christian Recorder*.

25. *Ibid.*

26. “Volunteers Wanted,” March 1, 1862, *Weekly Anglo African, Liberator*, March 7, 1862, *Anglo African*, March 22, 1862.

27. National Freedmen's Relief Association, May 1863, MHS, and *American Freedmen's Bulletin* 11, 6 (May 1866), MHS. On the Quakers, see Philadelphia Friends Annual Meeting Reports, 1863–1865, Haverford College.

28. Laura S. Haviland, *A Woman's Life-Work; Labors and Experiences* (Chicago: Waite, 1887), 246.

29. Haviland, *Woman's Life-Work*, 246–247.

30. Sarah Gage Journal, George Gage Papers, Manuscript Division, Perkins Library, Duke University.

31. Maria R. Mann to “Elisa,” February 10, 1863; Maria Mann to “Miss Peabody,” April 19, 1863, Maria Mann Papers, Library of Congress. Also

on Mann's work see Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, July 1, 1863, 24–25. Testimony of Ladies Contraband Society before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, [2 December 1863], filed with O-328 1863, Letters Received, ser. 12, Rg 94 [K-209] as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 584; National Freedmen's Relief Association, May 1863; and *American Freedmen's Bulletin* 11, 6 (May 1866). On the Quakers, see Philadelphia Friends Annual Meeting Reports, 1863–1865.

32. Julia Wilbur Diary (microfilm), November 5–10, 1862, Alexandria Historical Society, Alexandria, Virginia.

33. In regard to the reference to the slave pen, antebellum Alexandria was a major station in the interstate slave trade. Before buyers and auctioneers bid on slaves, they were often kept in a slave pen located on Duke Street in Alexandria. During the war, the pen became a holding cell for slaves who migrated to northern Virginia.

34. Julia Wilbur Diary, November 6, 1862.

35. For reformer's concern for personal hygiene, see Lydia Marie Child, *Freedmen's Book* (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1869); for military understanding of a clean environment, see Robert Reyburn, "Type of Disease among Freed People of the United States," in *New York Academy of Medicine*, New York, and, for example, Kipps to Robinson, October 12, 1866, Office of Staff Officers, Surgeon, Letters Sent, vol. 1 (31), Alabama, September 7, 1865–July 21, 1865, R 8, RG 105, BRFAL, Alabama Microfilm, NA.

36. B. B. French to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, February 13, 1862, F-187 1862, Letters Received, RG 107 [L-12], as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 262–263; *Nation*, August 15, 1872, 105.

37. "Negro Mortality at the South," *Nation*, August 15, 1872, 105.

38. Julia Wilbur to Abraham Lincoln, November 7, 1862; Capt. John C. Wyman to Brig. General John P. Slough, November 24, 1862, filed with W-1263 1862, Letters Received, ser. 12, RG 94 [K-55], as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 276–277.

39. Wilbur to Lincoln, November 7, 1862, as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 276–277.

40. Captain John C. Wyman to Brig. Genl. Jno P. Slough, October 21, 1862, and endorsements, enclosed in Qr. Mr. General M. C. Meigs to Hon. E. M. Stanton, December 13, 1862, "Alexandria, Va," Consolidated Correspondence File, ser. 225, Central Records, RG 92 [Y-226], as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 268–269.

41. *Ibid.*, 278–279.

42. General Heintzelman endorsement, Wyman to Slough, November 24, 1862, as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, 277.

43. Lewis McKenzie to Honl. E. M. Stanton, September 19, 1862, enclosed in Brigdr. Genl. Jno. P. Slough to Hon. E. M. Stanton, September 25, 1862, S-91 1862, Letters Received Irregular, RG 107 [L-179]. Wyman to Slough, October 21, 1862, and endorsements, enclosed in Qr. Mr. General M. C. Meigs to Hon. E. M. Stanton, December 13, 1862, as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 268–269.

44. Harriet Brent Jacobs, "Commentary," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 26, 1864, April 16, 1864.

45. O. O. Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1907), 194–201, L. P. Brockett, *Heroines of Rebellion* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Bros., 1908), 186, Yeatman, "Report on the Condition of the Freedmen of Mississippi," 16. This was also the beginning of the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission. See Freedmen's Inquiry Commission Papers, Widener Library, Harvard University.

46. *Second Annual Report of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society* (Boston: Published at the Office of the Society, 1864), 10.

47. Howard, *Autobiography*, 194–201.

48. Robert Dale Owen to Abraham Lincoln, August 5, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

49. *Second Annual Report of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society*, 37–38; Davis to Hardie, December 3, 1864.

50. Lucy Chase, before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, [10 May 1863], as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 150–153.

51. In fact, Bureau agents advocated for freedwomen "to stay home." Men were to go out to work, while women were "to take care of the household." Address Given at Arlington Cemetery, Daniel A. P. Murray Collection, 1807–1919, Library of Congress; John Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln, and the Freedman: Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1907), 34.

52. This idea does not contradict Jacqueline Jones's argument that emancipated women withdrew from the labor force in favor of being homemakers. Jones's research, much like Steven Hahn's new work on former slaves, charts the experience of those who were part of family or kin networks. My analysis examines what happened to those who were not, albeit temporarily, part of these associations. The constant reporting by military officers, government officials, physicians, and even the Northern press tells of the hundreds of freedwomen and children who were left without support. It is my position that these women and children were displaced because they were outside of the kin, and by extension, labor networks. Jacqueline Jones,

Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1985); Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

53. *Freedmen's Record*, January 1, 1866, MHS.

54. Daniel Freedmen and W. H. Redish to General Scott, October 12, 1866, Orangeburg, South Carolina, e. 3314. Letters Sent, Letters, General Orders, and Special Orders Received and Endorsements Sent and Received, RG 105, NA. Steve Hahn demonstrates how kin networks benefited African Americans politically, but economically the story is a bit different. Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

55. *Montgomery Daily Ledger*, October 12–13, 1865, p. 3, as quoted in Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South 1865–1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 131.

56. Combining local Bureau records in which at least two hundred freedwomen in any given area are unemployed and without access to rations; I have tallied thousands who were in what the Bureau defined as dependent or destitute condition. In the *American Freedmen*, General O. O. Howard published his report on the number of rations and stated that roughly seven million rations were provided to freedpeople from June 1865 to May 1866. See *American Freedmen*, included in *Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin*, September 1866, Library Company of Philadelphia, p. 91.

57. *Richmond Dispatch*, October 4, 1865, October 17, 1865, as quoted in Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South*, 131.

58. Jacob Gilbert Forman, *The Western Sanitary Commission; A Sketch of Its Origin, History, Labors for the Sick and Wounded of the Western Armies, and Aid Given to the Freedmen and Union Refugees, with Incidents of Hospital Life* (St. Louis: Published for the Mississippi Sanitary Fair), 14–15. On the state of Union camps, also see O. A. Judson to Abbott, July 18, 1863, Washington, e. 5412, Miscellaneous Records, 1861–1869, box 7, RG 393, Continental Army, NA. "Health in the Hospitals," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1861, pp. 718–730. Katherine Prescott Wormeley, *The Sanitary Commission of the United States Army: A Succinct Narrative of Its Works and Purpose* (New York: United States Sanitary Commission, 1864), 42–43. Thomas T. Ellis, *Leaves from the Diary of an Army Surgeon: Or, Incidents of Field, Camp, and Hospital Life* (New York: Bradburn, 1863), 312.

59. *Second Annual Report of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society*, 37–38.

60. U.S. Senate, *Laws in Relation to Freedmen*, 39th Cong., 2nd sess., Senate executive doc., no. 6, 164.

61. *Ibid.*, 26.

62. Testimony of Miss Lucy Chase before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, May 10, [1863], field with O-328 1863, Letters

Received, ser. 12, RG 94 [K-68], as quoted in Berlin, Miller, Reidy, and Rowland, *Freedom*, 154.

63. *Freedmen's Journal* 2, 3 (March 1866): 57.

64. For references to the sick house on the Butler plantations, see Butler Family Papers, 1771–1900, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Also see Catherine Clinton, *Fanny Kemble's Civil Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 204–205. While Clinton notes the resistance that some freedwomen expressed toward the sick house, this does not run counter to the idea that former slaves would have used such a home in order to prevent the further spread of smallpox, which plagued thousands of freed slaves in the region from 1864 to 1866. For more on the smallpox epidemic in South Carolina, see U.S. Senate, *Laws in Relation to Freedmen*, 114.

65. For more on the Butler plantation, see Clinton, *Fanny Kemble*, and Butler Family Papers, 1771–1900.

66. "Agreement between Baskerville and Betty, a Negro Family," December 25, 1865, "Agreement between Mason and Baskerville, December 25, 1865," "Agreement of Hands with R. Baskerville for the year 1866," signed November 24, 1865, MSS1B2924a 1669–1685, "Agreement, 1867 and 1868," "Hands Agreement, 1868," Baskerville Family Papers; "Contracts," Allen Family Papers, Buckingham County, Virginia, January 1866–January 1868, MSS1A1546c, microfilm; "Isaac Claiborne, January 17, 1866, Amelia County," Harvie Family Papers, MSS 1H2636c2844, "Amelia Burton," Harvie Family Papers, MSS 1H2636a2841, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

67. "Agreement between Charles J. Haskell and Freedmen and Freedwomen on Alston Plantation," July 21, 1865, sec. 24, MSS1C1118a 731–732, January 1, 1866, sec. 43, MSS 1c1118a8881, Cabell Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

68. U.S. Senate, *Laws in Relation to Freedmen*, 79–80; Register of Patients at Smallpox Hospital and Weekly Reports of Sick and Wounded Volume (163), R 49, Georgia, BRFAL, NA; U.S. Senate, *Laws in Relation to Freedmen*, 110–111; Alexander Augusta to Caleb W. Horner, June 2, 1866, Savannah, Lincoln Hospital, Letters Sent, vol. 1 (354), December 1865–January 1868, M 1903, R 85, BRFAL, NA.

69. *Weekly Anglo African*, January 18, 1862.

70. Report of Hon. T. D. Elliot, chairman of the Committee of Freedmen's Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, March 10, 1868 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1869). These statistics only tell part of the story. Records of Union physicians in the field suggest that the numbers in their specific jurisdictions were, in fact, much higher. Due to the countless number of freedpeople in need of medical assistance, many Bureau doctors claimed to be unable to keep accurate records. Furthermore, the statistics

regarding the number of afflicted freedpeople only represent those whom doctors encountered. In rural regions, places in which the Freedmen's Bureau did not establish a medical presence, the number of those infected with the virus went unreported.

71. Monthly Report of Sick and Wounded Refugees and Freedmen, June 1867, July 1867, Charlotte Freedmen's Hospital, 1867-1868, BRFAL, RG 105; North Carolina, e. 2587, box 32.

72. A. G. Brady to J. K. Fleming, June 1, 1866, New Berne, North Carolina, e. 2535, Letters Sent, BRFAL, RG 105.

73. Inventory, May 15, 1868, Columbia, South Carolina—1866-67, e. 3170, Letters Sent, BRFAL; for Washington, D.C., see Beebe to Roger, February 2, 1867, Subordinate Field Offices, Local Superintendent for Washington and Georgetown Correspondences, Letters Sent, vol. 1 (77), July 15, 1865-September 10, 1867, M 1902, R 13, BRFAL, RG 105.

74. For South Carolina, see J. V. DeHanne to Greese, June 18, 1867, Office of Staff Officers, Surgeon-in-Chief, Letters Sent and Register of Letters Received, September 1865-July 1867, vol. 52 (R 26), BRFAL, RG 105, NA; Pelzer to Hogan, January 16, 1868, Charleston, S.C., Letters Sent, e. 3132, September 1867-1869, BRFAL, RG 105; Pelzer to Lockwood, May 28, 1868, Charleston, S.C., Letters Sent, e. 3132, September 1867-1869, BRFAL, RG 105; for North Carolina, see Chase to C. A. Cilley, June 21, 1866, p. 52, Raleigh, N.C., e. 2535, Letters Sent, BRFAL, RG 105; for Washington, D.C., see Register of Patients in Female Ward of Lincoln Hospital, 1, July 1866-March 22, 1867, Consolidated Weekly Reports of Sick and Wounded Freedmen, R 19, M1902, BRFAL, RG 105.

75. Historian Lynette Jackson makes a similar argument in her study of medicine and gender in twentieth-century Africa. See Jackson, "Narratives of 'Madness' and Power: A History of Ingutsheni Mental Hospital and Social Order in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1908-1959" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1997).

76. Pelzer to Hogan, January 16, 1868; Beebe to Rogers, December 14, 1866, Subordinate Field Offices, Local Superintendent for Washington and Georgetown Correspondences, Letters Sent, vol. 1 (77), July 15, 1865-10 September 1867, M 1902, R 13, BRFAL, RG 105.

77. Lincoln Hospital for Women, Washington, D.C., Bureau Records, RG 105; Women's Asylum, South Carolina Inventory, RG 105; Women's Asylum, Louisiana Annual Reports, 1866, RG 105, NA.

78. For a brilliant analysis of the work of enslaved women as caretakers and healers in the antebellum South, see Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

79. *Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin*, February 1868, Library Company of Philadelphia, p. 6.

80. *Freedmen's Record*, May 1868, New England Freedmen's Association, MHS, pp. 78-79.

81. *Ibid.*