

# To Be Free

An Anthology of Seventh-grade Student Writing  
IS 187-Hudson Cliffs School  
New York, New York  
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## Table of Contents

Foreword	5
Student Reflections	6
Mr. Holthusen: Class 7A	7
We Will Be Free, by Dominic Tedesco	8
The World I Live In, by Ana Mateo-Jerez	8
To Be Free, by Elias Stein	9
As We Board the Ship, by Nathaniel Alms	9
The Struggle Is Real, by Sarah Rodriguez	10
A Slave's Perspective, by P. Cassia Duglio	10
The Distant Horizon, by Helina Gessesse-Franklin	11
The Unwanted Life, by Evdokiya Tsekas	11
As Each Day Goes By, by Luigi Avenia	12
The Path To Freedom, by Ksenya Mul	13
Hope of Being Free, by Luis Avila	15
When the Day Came, by Jilenny Guzman	15
The Thought Beforehand, by Jalyn Cameron	16
Free To Do Anything, by Paula Chiriboga	17
Freedom At Our Fingertips, by Charlotte Levenson	18
You Still Have a Long Way To Go, by Isabella Kumar	19
A Step Closer to Happiness, by Abigail Peralta	20
Freedom, by Nicholas Mancuso	21
Why We're Running, by Roxana Boitel	22
Property, by Abby Uysal	23
This Is It, by Esme Brayshaw	24
I Want To Be Free, by Leila Albellman	25
Vengeance, by Waskar Cruz	26
When We Are Free, by Alexander Tate Freeland	26
What Sickness, by Emmet L. Gebb	28
More Than We Can Bear, by Aurela Gjonbalaj	28
White Man Wants More Money, by Jason He	29
Dreams Turn Dark, by Mateo Inclan	29
Darkness, by Victor Marsh	30
I Want, by Sofia O'Malley	30
Afraid, by Riley Raff	31
Mr. Holthusen: Class 7B	33
All He Wants, by Catalina Diaz	34
I Will Be Free, by Ruilin Yang	35
To Be Brave, by Elizabeth Fernando	36
We Made It, by Anibal Flores	37

Until We Could Run No More, by Rachel Garcia	37
Here To Help Us, by Juan L. Abreu	38
The Truth, by Ivan Degtyarev	39
A Better Life, by Yeury Garcia	39
No Matter What, by Julia Klein	40
My Life Is So Crazy, by Leurys Abreu	40
So We Ran, by Ciara Fajardo	41
We Have To Run Faster, by Brian Gonzalez	41
I Don't Have a Choice, by Marcelle Guilbet	42
My Name Is Mary, by Ryen Jones	42
We Had To Move Fast, by Briana Marte	43
When There Is No Freedom, by Nathaniel Marte	43
We Must Run, by Rileigh McDonald	44
The Man Who Wanted Freedom, by Briana Melendez	45
We Won't Fall, by Yerson Ortiz	46
Far Away From Here, by Jacob Pavia	46
Because We Wanted To Be Free, by Angelica Pena	46
Do You Want To Be Free? by Elvis Pena	47
The Trail To Freedom, by Alexa Ramos	48
When Freedom Comes, by Jonathan Reyes	48
Never Go Back, by Eliani Rubio	49
Happy To Leave, by Jenifer Salas	49
There Is Freedom, by Brihannie Tavarez	50
There Is Happiness, by Pablo Valle	50
When Freedom Comes To Town, by Salvador Espailat	51
Mr. Holthusen: Class 7C	53
Everything Is Going To Be Okay, by Janelly Silva	54
A Day I Would Remember, by Christopher Young	54
Leaving My Family, by Filip Savkovic	55
The Last Time, by Natania Sarita	55
My Name Is Leea, by Kakiah Rolon	56
There Should Be Justice, by Anthony Polanco	56
Never Coming Back, by Vlymarie Pena	56
Sold, by Jaiden Paulino	57
Auctioneer, by Susie Marrero	57
Money Is What I Need, by Valentina Kukaj	57
Why Do You Want Me? by Derwin Guzman	57
I Want To Go Home, by Sherly Guerron	58
Wanting Freedom, by Paola Fabian	58
One Day, by Theo Espinal	58
A New Life, by Hazel Abreu	59

On Our Way To Chicago, by Justin Zayas	59
We Just Ran, by Angel Vasquez	60
We Are Never Safe, by Jennifer Ruiz	60
Determination, by Ranphy Reyes	61
The Only Thing On My Mind, by Juart Reyes	62
They Trust Me, by Matthew Molina Restrepo	62
Going To That Good Place, by Daysi Martinez	63
The Last To Get Out, by Alex Martinez	64
A Great Life, by Brian Lantigua	64
As a Family, by Steven Howard	65
Fear, by Joshua Bruce	65
Until the Sun Sets, by Daisy Cortes	66

## Foreword

Welcome to *To Be Free*, an anthology of writing by the seventh-grade students of IS 187-Hudson Cliffs School in Manhattan. It was completed during a ten-week residency from December of 2016 through February of 2017 for Teachers & Writers Collaborative.

The goal of the residency was to bring creative writing strategies into the social studies classroom—specifically, to help deepen students’ understanding of the human impact of slavery in the early United States.

First, we presented the students with pictures of slavery. We asked them to bring those pictures to life by identifying with a person in that picture, and then use empathy and imagination to answer a series of questions: *What does the person in this picture see? What do they hear? What are they afraid of? What do they want?* Students then crafted their answers into the monologues and persona poems you’ll find in this book.

Next, we looked at “runaway slave posters,” and at one in particular describing a family of five who escaped together. We created a list of characters involved in this event. We then asked the students to tell the story of the escape from the perspective of more than one character. Again, the students used empathy and imagination to turn these forgotten names on a poster into living, breathing human beings.

My thanks to Cynthia Chory, principal of IS 187, and to Assistant Principal Nilda Marrero for their support for this project. A special thanks to Parent Coordinator Isabelle Eaton for her enthusiasm and positivity in making this program possible.

My thanks especially to John Holthusen, seventh-grade teacher at IS 187, for being a strong and supportive partner in the classroom.

Finally, a big thank you to all the seventh-grade students of IS 187 for your hard work, empathy, and imagination. This book is for you.

*David Surface*  
*Writer-in-Residence*  
*Teachers & Writers Collaborative*

***Student reflections:***

Using creative writing in Social Studies has put history in a whole different perspective. It allows me to see and feel the emotions of the people I'm learning about. As we connected Social Studies and creative writing through slavery, it allowed me to see through slaves' eyes, to feel what they felt in their heart. It made me realize how genuinely horrible slavery was and how critical it is that we make sure it never happens again. Social Studies without creative writing is like a 2-D movie where you don't understand the characters' feelings or the story-line. With creative writing, Social Studies is like a 3-D movie that you see through the character's eyes and feel through his heart. Creative writing gives Social Studies so much more detail and importance, that when the bell rings to leave, you wish you could stay and learn all day.

*—Luigi Avenia, 7A-401*

This experience has greatly influenced my writing. It felt invigorating to learn new literary techniques to spice up my writing. Since the start of this class, my writing (in my eyes) has gotten much more captivating. A common mistake I made was not explaining the back story or the motives of a character, and the "why" technique has really helped me.

*—Mateo Inclan, 7A-405*

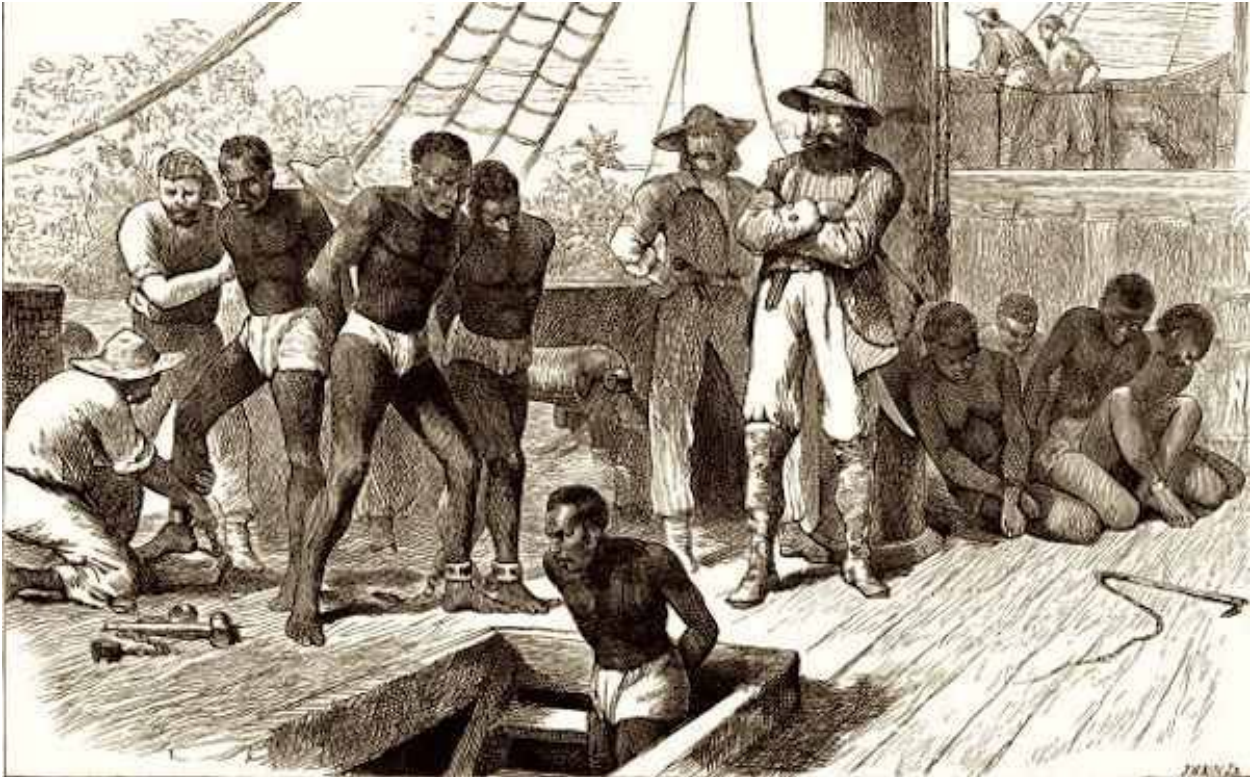
Creative writing has made me want to learn more about our history.

*—Riley Raff, 7A-407*

# **Class 7A**

## **Mr. Holthusen**





## **We Will Be Free**

Dominic Tedesco

I see the never-ending darkness of the staircase as I'm walking down. I look to my left and see my people being chained up like animals, by the white people. I hold in my anger. *Someday...we will be free*, I want to say. I hear the clanking of chains, and the cries of fear coming from people not knowing where they are going. The only things I can smell are the peaceful ocean, the sweat coming from me, and the worst, the painful blood from others. I remember praying every night, hoping that I can see my wife and daughter again. I look up at the bright blue sky and take a deep breath, fearing this might be the last breath I ever take.

## **The World I Live In**

Ana Mateo-Jerez

I see slaves struggling to get off of the ship, my ship, my crew obeying my orders, the slaves going down into the cargo hole. The chains clanking, the whip cracking, and my



crew's commanding voices surrounding me. The sweat, the ocean, the slaves' scent drifting to my nose.

I feel content, triumphant, proud, powerful, but I want to be with my family, to please my family with the money I've gotten, because I love my family. The fear of losing my power and hurting my family always haunts me, eating at me slowly and painfully.

I am a homesick man. With every new shipment of slaves, I dream of leaving these dirty slaves and ships, and going back to my young and carefree life, the memory I fall asleep to every night as I question the world I live in.

### **To Be Free**

Elias Stein

The white men drag me onto the floating structure, pushing me down into the dark belly of the vessel. The sight of my people in chains is all that fills my eyes; nothing else is visible to me in the darkness. My people's cries of terror and agony fill my ears; the chains upon my hands clank to only enrage me further. The smell of sweat and blood fills my nostrils, the stench of our own waste is the only thing I am able to comprehend. The chains chafe against my wrists, my companions' bodies pressing against my flesh in the dark confines of our prison. To be free is my only desire, that we may feel our families' warm embrace and play in the trees with our children once more. The men who imprison us put fear in my heart, for a dread that they will devour us like a pack of starved lions. Why do these men hold us captive, I wonder. For what design are we imprisoned within this cruel vessel? Thoughts of my family flood my mind, making me want nothing more than to see them again. My dreams are filled with desire for my family to be with me again, safe in a world devoid of these evil men.

### **As We Board the Ship**

Nathanial Alms

The screams from other Africans invade my ear as we board the ship  
More and more, whips are cracking on us Africans as we board the ship  
The smell of flesh and blood is forcing its way up my nose as we board the ship

Sadness is launching its way up my body as we board the ship  
The urge of me wanting to get off this ship is triggered by me not wanting to live with these weird whites; I think about this as I board the ship  
Fear runs up my body as I worry, when will the whites eat us? I am worried, as we board the ship  
The memories of my family take a swim in my tears, as we board the ship

I have a horrid nightmare of my life flickering out  
after we've boarded the ship

### **The Struggle Is Real**

Sarah Rodriguez

The sight of chains and white man whipping others makes me want to have a nervous breakdown. I hear waves crashing, screaming, and cries of pain. The sound of wood creaking on the boat makes me feel creeped out. The smell of sweat and old blood makes me want to throw up. I feel tired and terrified because there are people getting whipped and I'm doing a lot of labor. I want to have freedom because I can't handle the pain of getting whipped. I am also having to do someone else's work for them. The thought of me being with my family is a life-long dream. I always dream of my old life because it used to be so happily perfect.

### **A Slave's Perspective**

P. Cassia Duglio

The sight of the dark, dank, tightly-packed hold of the ship fills me with dread. Women are giving birth and it hurts to know how they are to be broken, inside and out. The desperation in me is overwhelming. I smell fear in the cold air and it is contagious. I am scared. I am homesick, kidnapped against my will. The sounds of the weak and the broken are traumatizing. The sounds of terror and the whips cracking make me cringe. We are broken. Broken by the white men. I feel contaminated. I have been touched by people, a lot of strangers. It's wrong. I shouldn't have to feel this way. I should be safe in my home. The thought of the soft noises from home taunt me. The happy, secure, reassuring sounds. The sounds of pots and pans, chipped and clanking, ready for hot

food. The sounds of the hustle and bustle of family moving in and out of the house. All these thoughts and sounds and feelings and sights made me believe, and dream about being free, finally *free*.

## **The Distant Horizon**

Helina Gessesse-Franklin

With my eyes drooping with exhaustion, I just manage to make out the trees surrounding my home, far out in the distance. The sound of waves crashing against the side of the boat assails my ears because it has been so long since I have been able to hear anything without a canvas bag over my head. As I am rocked side to side on the boat, like the elders taking their morning naps in hammocks, the scent of salty water surrounding the boat parades into my nostrils, an unwelcome intruder, and a miasma of blood and body odor attacks me. I can see whips lashing, which are soon accompanied by cries of pain, and skin tearing with the sound of peeling paint. The rusting metal chains slowly erode the flesh on my wrists with every clank I hear, and with every slave I count, hope becomes as unattainable as the horizon, and freedom, even further. Splinters bury themselves in my feet, but the pain is nothing compared to the pain of defeat. I want to free myself, even if it means killing killing people, but this thought terrifies me for I fear I am becoming as animalistic as the light men who take us like something to be mined and kept. I remember elders from nearby clans discussing the dilemma of the men with skins like the clouds in the sky, but I never thought these phantoms would ever lay their eyes on me. I dream of dying by drowning, hopefully in the ocean nearby my home, for I know any other desire would simply be a fantasy.

## **The Unwanted Life**

Evdokiya Tsekas

The people who I know are being thrown underneath a dark space, being squished together. The cries of fear and pain hurt me inside. I'm scared, angry, sad, and in pain, for I don't know what's to come. The smell of sweat and the ocean breeze hits my nose. The pain I feel hurts because I have been walking for days and seen many horrific things. I just want to be free and happy again with my family. I'm scared for what is going to happen to my family and me. The memory of my family I will always have. At night I dream of being happy, safe, and free with my family once again. One day I hope that I will wake up from this bad dream. But until then I am still dreaming. Maybe someone someday will wake me up from this nightmare.

# **\$200 Reward.**

RANAWAY from the subscriber, on the night of Thursday, the 30th of September,

## **FIVE NEGRO SLAVES,**

To-wit: one Negro man, his wife, and three children.

The man is a black negro, full height, very erect, his face a little thin. He is about forty years of age, and calls himself *Washington Reed*, and is known by the name of Washington. He is probably well dressed, possibly takes with him an ivory headed cane, and is of good address. Several of his teeth are gone.

*Mary*, his wife, is about thirty years of age, a bright mulatto woman, and quite stout and strong.

The oldest of the children is a boy, of the name of FIELDING, twelve years of age, a dark mulatto, with heavy eyelids. He probably wore a new cloth cap.

MATILDA, the second child, is a girl, six years of age, rather a dark mulatto, but a bright and smart looking child.

MALCOLM, the youngest, is a boy, four years old, a lighter mulatto than the last, and about equally as bright. He probably also wore a cloth cap. If examined, he will be found to have a swelling at the navel.

Washington and Mary have lived at or near St. Louis, with the subscriber, for about 15 years.

It is supposed that they are making their way to Chicago, and that a white man accompanies them, that they will travel chiefly at night, and most probably in a covered wagon.

A reward of \$150 will be paid for their apprehension, so that I can get them, if taken within one hundred miles of St. Louis, and \$200 if taken beyond that, and secured so that I can get them, and other reasonable additional charges, if delivered to the subscriber, or to THOMAS ALLEN, Esq., at St. Louis, Mo. The above negroes, for the last few years, have been in possession of Thomas Allen, Esq., of St. Louis.

**WM. RUSSELL.**

ST. LOUIS, Oct. 1, 1847.

### **As Each Day Goes By**

Luigi Avenia

I see wooden shackles on my arms and legs  
Because I refused to set foot on the treacherous ship  
The sound of the whip cracking as it comes down again and again  
Because I stood tall and said no to my captors  
The smell of my own blood running down my body like a stream  
Because the whip never stops hitting my body  
I feel pain as well as vengeful and confused  
Because every time the whip hits me, I only grow stronger  
I remember him, clear as day, whipping me until my back looked like torn rags  
I dream about one day being free  
Because as each day goes by, the number of my scars only grows

As each day goes by, time is only wasted obeying greed  
As each day goes by, we only get smarter and stronger  
And when the right time comes, we will rise

## **The Path To Freedom**

Ksenya Mul

*Mary Reed:*

We have been working for Master Russell for over fifteen years, and he is a relatively fair owner. My family is well cared for, but that is just because we are our Master's personal servants. The white children play with Matilda, Fielding, and Malcolm. Matilda was allowed to look over Helen's arithmetic and writing books. Russell provides us with clothing, food, and shelter. Everything about our lives seems perfect, but it's not. For our freedom has been unjustly taken away. The ability to go to parties when we want to, not just when Master takes us along. I want to be proud of what I do and take credit for it. For this very reason, on the 30th of September, we will run from this place. For now, I go through my daily chores. Bending down with my aching back, washing, scrubbing, and making the floor shine. As the sun closed in, I became more anxious and doubtful with every time the small arrow turned. At last came the 8th hour of the day, and I went down to our small room in the basement to gather the few belongings I have. My hands tremble as I try to put on a fresh dress. The dim candlelight illuminates the pastel green walls, quivering from time to time. The extreme silence of the night sets up even more suspense. Oh how I wish it weren't so. I want the people to run and shout, creating as much chaos as possible. But alas, the crickets and frog croaks are all that fills the evening silence. I wait another minute, then hustle over the creaking floor to reach Washington. He is just sitting on the floor, staring at the walls. "Is it time?" he asks me. And with regret, I slowly answer, "Yes."

I break down in tears, for I will have to leave forever, and, in the process, may lose my life. The operation we are undergoing is neither safe nor guaranteed. With every floorboard I step on, I keep count for those that are either missing or loudly creak. There are also many mice prancing underground. I hope that one will not run under my foot. My silhouette is surrounded by pitch-darkness, and my soul feels so as well. I tiptoe over to my children's room and blow out the candle-powered lantern. Russell has been generous enough to supply us with a dirt-floor basement with several loose floorboards. He also let Washington use an old ivory-handled cane for the time when his foot hurt and he couldn't walk. Washington is very possessive of that cane; he treasures it. Master certainly did care for us. But he didn't care enough to set us free.

I open the creaking door as silently as possible. The sight of three innocent sleeping children makes my eyes water again, but I am determined to stay strong for them. I walk up to the grimy blanket on which they sleep and gently shake them awake. Matilda

wakes first; she was always the lightest sleeper. Then Fielding, but I do not wake Malcolm because he may start crying and wailing which is a disturbance I do not wish for. I carefully lift the young boy's flailing body and cradle him close to my heart. Again, I step away from the bed and towards the door, avoiding mice and rats. The children follow me as I open the door and step outside. To exit the servants' quarters, you have to go through a hall. After I close the dirty trap door, I enter a room of wonder. The marble floor of this part of the mansion greatly fascinates me, and gives a strong, cold aura to the passing people. As we advance further down the hall, I get ready to open the back door. As I do so, I also take my first breath of the fresh outside air. I run across the grass, the children and Washington following me. Then I stop, suddenly remembering that Master often let the dogs loose during the night. I turn around, consumed in the nighttime abyss, and whisper to my family the word, "Run." From then on, all I recall is the trampling of feet and the rush of my desperate breath. We finally reach the wooden wagon and see young Robert tending the horses. His family served the Russells for more than five decades, but his parents got involved in a brawl with the local preacher, and when the old man turned up dead, the two got hanged. The boy was seriously traumatized, often staring into the distance. He was taunted and bullied at the school, so he came here to work and pay for his keep. Now he looks at us, smiling, ready to run far from the memories that haunt him...

#### *White Accomplice:*

I look at the family, smiling at them. Without their support, I never would have had the wits to run. They go on the wagon but Matilda stays with me. She looks up at me and grins. The young lady always liked me best, calling me "Uncle Rob." I put her on my lap and command the horses to move. Washington scolds me to bring Matilda inside. She smiles at me and runs into the wagon as I stop. You cannot see anything in the dark of night, and we dare not light a lantern, for others might see it. So now we ride in fear and hope silently with the crickets. And then a gunshot echoes through the quiet night, and we all hear a mad shout belonging to our master. It is he who accused my parents of murdering the preacher. My hatred of him is beyond any human emotion. My hands start trembling as I urge the horses to go faster and faster. Rain starts falling into my unprotected face and hands. Master Russell will kill me in cold blood if he discovers evidence of my participation in this conspiracy. I pull the reins, forcing the horses to go right, onto a trail in the woods. I force myself to stop trembling, and the cold, wet rain is brought to my attention. My hands struggle to reach the tip of my hat. This is a journey to freedom, happiness, and joy. Once we make it to my uncle's house in New Jersey, I will no longer be contained by the tyranny of Mr. Russell. Just this thought makes the day brighter and warmer. Mary told Russell that they have a freed relative living in Michigan. That is where they think we will go. This is the hard path to freedom. Full of lies, strength, despair, and hope.

## **Hope of Being Free**

Luis Avila

*Washington:*

My family and I are runaway slaves. We went through a lot to escape. We wanted to run away because we were beaten and had to work all day in horrible weather. We also hated the dirty old houses that we live in. I have this ivory-handled cane because I tried to escape and as punishment my toes were cut off. We managed to escape with the help of the white man. We came up with a plot to travel at night to lower the chances of getting caught. I trusted the white man because after a meeting we became good friends. He told us we can hide in his wagon as we traveled. For once, I had hope of finally being free.

*The White Man:*

I was at the tavern when I overheard two of Russell's slaves talking about a man named Washington trying to escape. I walked over to them and I offered to help. I wanted to help because I had heard about Russell and the way he treated his slaves and it made me sick. I asked to meet Washington tomorrow. The next day, I went back to the tavern and talked with Washington. I asked him about his cane and he told me his toes were cut off when he tried to escape. I was so angry when I heard this, but I remained calm. He told me he wanted to escape because his family was treated bad. After a bit of convincing, he finally agreed to travel in my wagon at night. We became good friends and I knew I had to help him, and I couldn't let him down.

## **When the Day Came**

Jilenny Guzman

*Washington:*

Me and my family were making plans about running away. It took me and my wife a few weeks to make a plan. While me and my wife sometimes met up, our owner almost caught us two or three times. I don't think he overheard but I could be mistaken. He always looked at us suspiciously and always had his whip out when he was near me and my children. When the day came that we were gonna escape, we were all nervous but happy. We got some of our stuff and got a wagon and started leaving. We saw someone but we didn't get a close look because they left right away. We were all relieved when we got far away. So we rested for a while and got back on the road with no problems at all. We were still on the wagon and we got there safely.

*William Russell:*

My slaves Washington, Mary, and their kids Matilda, Malcolm, and Fielding ran away. I should have known! They were acting strange around me and I just kept punishing them. They probably left because they think I overworked them, but I didn't—there's just a lot of work to get done. And I only whip them when I thought they were disrespectful to me or didn't get the job done. If I ever find him, it won't end good. I should have never given him that cane. He probably thought I trusted him and liked him. The only reason I gave him that cane was because he was walking like a cripple and I did not like that, so I decided to give him a cane, and the only cane I had was an ivory-handled one. I wasn't gonna spend any more money on him than I did when I bought him.

### **The Thought Beforehand**

Jalyn Cameron

*Mary:*

I've had enough...I'm tired of waking up to the sound of whips cracking in the air and skin tearing, loud screams echoing soon after, and desperate prayers for freedom. I've spent fifteen long years of my life in this dump, filled with pain, under-eating, and hard labor. I'm not happy anymore, I don't look forward to the days anymore. I've lost hope. The only thing I live for is my family. We should experience opportunity. I want my own house, to work a paying job, let my babies go to school. I can't. I can not have that dream if I stay here. I want the best for me and my family...the absolute best. That's why we must run.

*William Russell:*

God damn it, them slaves ran away! I should have known. That whole family been acting suspicious, slipping food in their pockets, "saving it for later," they say, making extra clothing out of used potato sacks. I can not believe it has not crossed my mind once that they were planning on running. \$300 for both the husband and wife, so they stole \$600 dollars from me. When I find them—and I will find them—they're gonna pay. The whole family will pay. Tomorrow I'm bringing the dogs and putting an ad in the newspaper and I'm gonna bring them slaves back where they belong.



## Free To Do Anything

Paula Chiriboga

*Washington:*

When Malcolm was born, we all decided that we should run away from Mr. William Russell. Why would we run away, you might ask? Well, Mr. William was one of the meanest people I've ever seen. He would whip me or Mary if he was mad at anyone, and would make us do all the chores in the house, which was tiring. So we started to store food for our escape. We would ask Matilda, my only daughter, to sneak us food during the night, and Mary would sneak us food when she was cooking. We had enough food to last us two months when Mr. Russell started to notice. We had to go the following night before he had to retrieve all of his food. We have heard that in the north, we can be free to do anything.

*Matilda:*

When Papa told me we were becoming runaways, I was relieved out of my mind. That Mr. William guy was driving me crazy. He would give me more work than I could handle, even on Sunday. I once heard that Sundays were for reading the Bible and resting, but no, he wouldn't even let us touch a Bible, let alone read one. So I agreed to gather as much food during the night as I could. Not too little, or it will take a month to get enough for breakfast, but not so much that it'll make noise. In a week's time, we had enough for two months worth of eating. Thanks to Mama too. (She also helped with the gathering.) When I went for more food one of those nights, I heard Mr. William ask his wife why the food supply was shortening. I quickly tiptoed to tell Papa. He said we were running away to a place called "the North."

*Fielding:*

Pa told me to write in his journal for him today, for he is carrying a lot of things. So today we went to this place Pa calls a tavern. This weird guy came out to see us when Pa knocked on the door twice. He said, "Cranberry," and Pa said, "Harvest." Weird, right? Well, turns out they were some sort of code-words used by them. Pa told me this an hour later. When we made it to the end of the town, we turned around and said our goodbyes to the town we all once said was our home.

*Matilda:*

I don't know what "the North" was, but I would go anywhere to see, feel, taste, or at least hear Freedom. Papa said we had to make a quick stop before we left the town we called home. Turns out, the stop was a blue tavern. Papa knocked twice, a man showed up and took a look at us. Then he said, "Cranberry." Well, that was a bit rude. I was about to say this when Papa said, "Harvest." The strange white man left us outside and went in as if to get something. I looked up at Papa for an explanation but he just

winked. The man showed up with clothes and an ivory-headed cane and said to hurry up because word got around fast in town. I bet that 's how Papa knew to say, "Harvest."

*Fielding:*

Pa said I can continue to write in his journal until he wants to write in it again. So we headed into the forest and changed into our new clothes. We all want the ivory-handled cane but Pa decided he should have it since no one can decide who should get it. He also got to color some of his teeth black with ink so it can look like he doesn't have a lot of teeth. Then we all continued until we came to a barn. I was too tired to walk another step. We had to sleep in the unknown barn. We soon found out that it wasn't as unknown as we thought...

*Matilda:*

I just found out that me and Papa were sharing the same diary and life-journal. So to not repeat him, I will continue what he started from now until we are free. Well, then, after we woke, we heard someone coming in to milk the cow. After she left, we drank whatever was left over from the milking and ate what was in the cow's food box. Then we all left through the back door. We saw this white man eating toast with jam. Papa said he was on his way to "the North." The man responded, "Then go to the barn and hitch up the wagon." That's what we did.

## **Freedom At Our Fingertips**

Charlotte Levenson

*Slaveowner:*

The light was on in the slaves' quarters again. A soft yellow glow in the dark night. I know I should go over and punish them, threaten to whip them or something, but I don't have the mental strength. I peered out the window, pressed my face against the cold glass windowpane. For the first time in my life, I felt like the slaves had some sort of power over me. I decided to go to bed. Definitely not the choice my father or brothers would make. They always had an idea of what a slaveowner would be like, what a "man" should be like, and I just never seemed to fit in. I climbed into bed, wishing for a better life. Wishing that I didn't have to be a slaveowner.

*Matilda:*

I'm always tired, always hungry, always thirsty. I'm only six, just a little girl, shouldn't have to be treated this way. I hate this place. The whippings, dirty quarters, and the long hours of work we was supposed to do. My Mommy and Daddy have given us hope. They planning for us to escape, to leave. But we can't tell nobody. It's a secret, Mommy

says. A couple days later I almost passed out from the heat. Mommy said she'd had enough, Daddy said we was leaving tonight. They pack our things. I run outside to get some firewood once night comes. Once we was all together, Daddy opens the door and we step out into the night. The cool grass soothes my sore feet. We silently creep by Master's house. Mommy's heart beatin' fast, Daddy's hands sweatin', and the rest of us restless with excitement. We finally made it past the house, down the road, and onto the forest path, when Daddy whispers, "Freedom is at our fingertips. Together we can make it."

## **You Still Have a Long Way To Go**

Isabella Kumar

*Washington:*

I banged the side of a nearby wall. One of the Master's friends living at the farm heard. "Hey! What was that?" he yelled. "Sorry, that was the kid. He's very playful, you know," I said, pointing at Malcolm. He smiled. "Well, if he becomes 'playful' again, he's gonna have to get a punishment." The man walked off. "Was that the signal?" asked Malcolm. "Yes. Now go get Mommy, Fielding, and Matilda." Malcolm rushed off. "You got the keys?" A familiar figure stepped out of the shadows. "Yep. We're ready." We were planning the escape for a couple of mouths now. One of Master's friends said he'd help us escape. His name is Lance. Lance told Master he was going on a walk to check if the gate is locked. We arrived at the gate, Lance opened it for us, and we ran off. The stressful feeling I had before was gone. We were free!

*Mr. Russell:*

I had just woken up. It was morning when I noticed Washington, Matilda, Malcolm, Fielding, and Mary were gone. My voice broke as I ordered a search party for them. \$900 worth of slaves, gone. *I need to find them*, I thought. We looked for over a week. On the third day, I even made a poster. I was panicking. Every day I paced my office. Washington was my best slave. He was not domestic, but he was a good worker. I never found them.

*Washington:*

We had been walking for a few days. We wondered if Lance got found out for helping us. One night we made a fire. "The fire is too weak. I'll get some wood," said Mary. She got up and walked into the woods. "Daddy, do you think the hare will taste good?" Matilda asked quietly. "Sure it will, Matty." She sighed. "Daddy, don't call me that! I'm a big girl now." Matilda is only six. I was about to laugh and say *You still have a long way to go*, but then I heard shouts nearby. "Mary!" I whispered. "Matty, stay here." I ran

toward the shouts and found hunters speaking with Mary. "That's her! And that's the guy! The slaves from the poster!" A minute later, they had all of us in chains.

*Mr. Russell:*

I was surprised when I heard a *ring* at the gate. I went to the gate and found three huntsmen with my slaves. Ten minutes later, they had the money in their hands. "Thank you, goodbye," I said, and they walked off. I turned back to Washington and the others. "You're getting punishment tonight." I couldn't help smiling. *Oh, whip, here I come*, I laughed to myself. I am happy they got brought back.

## **A Step Closer to Happiness**

Abigail Peralta

*Matilda:*

Papa, Mama, Fielding, Malcolm and I have a secret. We are going to escape from our Master tonight. We all swore to tell nobody about our plan, or else, Mama said, she'd whip our behind and we'd have to skip supper. But even though I swore to tell no one, it's been damn hard to keep my mouth shut. For all I know, we're running away 'cause our cruel old Master is a dog and he smells like one too. Our Master, he might dress us decently, but he treats us very badly, makes us work all day for long hours. I hate working, especially on a hot summer day 'cause the sun's in your face and you become so sweaty that you feel like you're in a sweat pool. Plus, I become stinky and smell my sweaty odor while working. Whenever our Master's in one of his bad moods, he makes us work longer than usual and whips us if we work too slow. It makes me shiver when our Master whips us, especially Malcolm. Not more than a month ago, Malcolm was whipped harder than he ever had been before by old dog face for sticking his tongue out at him. Ever since then, he's had a huge swelling around the stomach. Though sleeping is the best part of our day, we don't get much of it 'cause we gotta get back to work and cleaning. I guess that Papa and Mama decided for all of us to escape so we won't keep on getting treated so badly and be free, so I'm excited about the plan tonight.

*Malcolm:*

Like Matilda said, Mama, Papa, Fielding, herself, and I are going to escape tonight, and we're getting ready. We've just finished eating the biggest, most delicious supper I've ever had, and I'm as full as a lion. We ate lots of tasty beans and bread, and I was really happy 'cause I don't often get to eat that much, so I usually go to sleep hungry. Many said she wants us to eat extra food and be full 'cause we'll be walking a lot. Suddenly I hear Mama telling me, plus Matilda and Fielding to wash up. I thought it was strange to be washing up while the sun's still out, but I didn't say nothing 'cause I'm afraid Papa

will slap my behind a little. When we was finished, we had no choice but to go to sleep, even Papa! As I lay down on the floor, I shut my eyes and fell asleep, but was soon woken up by Mama, 'cause it was time for us to escape. It was two in the morning, and our Master, old dog face, was deep in sleep by then. He was snoring as loud as an elephant; even the neighbors could hear him. Before leaving, we all began praying to the Lord our God, asking for strength and safety. Then we were off, silently walking until the sound of old dog face's snoring disappeared, and our hearts were pounding so loud, we could hear them thumping. As we walked further away from our old home, we became relieved and began to walk slower, but I held onto Mama's hand. While we walked in the darkness, I saw rain slowly falling to the ground. To me, the drops of rain felt refreshing and chilling, 'cause it was a hot night. I thought it was better raining, 'cause then less folks will hear us walking after midnight. Even though we've just been walking for two hours, I feel really tired and wanna sleep some more.

## **Freedom**

Nicholas Mancuso

*Matilda:*

Mommy always talked 'bout something named "Freedom." She said we would get it in a place called Chicago. Based on what Mommy and Daddy told me, this Chicago was a place of wonder where everyone lives in peace and there is no slavery. For some reason they didn't want me to tell Master Russell about our upcoming adventure, but I didn't listen, and I dearly regret it. Anyways, Mommy and Daddy made it clear that "Freedom in Chicago was a great thing, so I thought Master Russell would be happy for us. (This doesn't happen to many others, Mommy once told me.) When I told him, he was quite the opposite. He was as red as the tomatoes we pick in the plantation. He was so mad that he got his whip, and that is never, ever a good thing. What did he have against us getting "Freedom," whatever it means?

*William Russell:*

Them slaves did something they weren't supposed to do, and now they are to pay. I stormed into their bunkhouse, but instead of torturing them physically, I did it mentally. The sight of them crying in pain was absolutely amazing. I grabbed the stupid little slave that they called Malcolm, and I cracked that whip on his tiny stomach. His parents cried for mercy, but they put themselves in this situation by wanting to run away. But why would they want to? I give them the perfect living. I supply them with a free house, free food, free everything, and yet I am still under-appreciated by Washington and his family. They wouldn't be able to survive out in the real world. They are absolutely incapable of fending for themselves. So why would they want to? Plus, they cost a whole lot of money, so they aren't running away on my watch!

## Why We're Running

Roxana Boitel

*Mary:*

Life has been hard here at the plantation. We work long hours and as a reward we get whipped. The worst part is seeing my children suffer. I just want them to have them home I used to have before I got captured. I'm done with working for my "master." He sickens me. I want to leave. So tonight we run away.

I've been thinking about this for a while. I never thought I would actually go through with it. I've heard stories about other slaves that ran away, and that always scared me. But last week when I saw my precious four-year-old son get beat because he was wandering off and not working, I thought enough was enough.

That's why we're running.

The plan is to give a signal to my family, then everyone runs as fast as they can. I'm ready to run. I'm ready to give the signal. I'm holding my four-year-old son. I give the signal. Everyone runs but me. I can't seem to move. I'm *terrified*. Then I think about my journey here. I was terrified when I was captured and put on a prison ship. I was terrified when I met my "Master." So now that I have the chance to run away, I can't. I'm so scared. I walk back into my house, ready to quit. Then I think, I *can't* quit. I always thought that being a slave was *quitting*. But it's not. I thought giving my children a terrible childhood was *quitting*. Now that I think of it, not running away is *quitting*. I'm not ready to *quit*. Not yet. So I run. I'm far behind the others, but I made it. And sometimes "making it" is all I need.

We ran away.

I didn't quit.

And now.

I'm free.

I can't wait to see where my future takes me.

*Matilda:*

We escaped the plantation today. It was hard and scary. I am so tired, and just want some food. We had to wait till dark and wait until we could see stars in the sky. It was hard to wait all day. Once Mama gave us the signal, we ran. I ran as fast as I could. My

Mama ran slower because she had to carry my little brother. On the way, we met a white guy. He was nice. His head was shiny because he had no hair. He told us he was very happy to bump into us. He also told us about how he didn't believe in slavery. After we talked to him for a while, we were invited into his home for a meal. We weren't sure if we could trust him, but we were hungry...so we ate. He asked if we wanted to live with him in his house. There would be chores but we would get paid, and we would be treated nice. But that's when I saw it—a crumpled piece of paper in his back pocket. It was a poster about a family just like mine who escaped at plantation. Isn't that funny... *WAIT!*

## **Property**

Abby Uysal

*Matilda:*

I honestly didn't think we were going to get caught. It was all going so well. We had already gone an entire day moving north without anybody even close to catching us. When the sun finally set, we set up camp in a ditch we found in the forest, finally settling in. So of course it would be just our luck for a hunter to stumble upon our hiding place in the middle of the night. Fielding, who was on guard duty that hour, jumped from his seat, eyes wide, and woke all of us up. Well, all but me. I was already awake, staring petrified at the man with a gun. But once I finally got over the shock, I stood and backed up against a tree along with the rest of my family who had snapped awake as soon as Fielding touched them. Dad was holding Fielding by the shoulder, leaning most of his weight on his ivory-tipped cane. Malcolm was holding onto Mom's hand, the other thumb in his mouth. Our eyes were as wide as the saucers Master used back at the plantation. It seemed to be forever that we were just looking at the man. Suddenly, his face broke into a huge smile and he started cackling—an awful sound. It made me think that he was choking. "Well, lookee what we have here," he said, calming down but still smiling. "Ima get some good money for your five." We didn't respond. His smiling, dopey face turned angry faster than I could blink. "Follow me or I'll shoot you dead!" That got us. We startled, then gathered what we could and set off with the man. It was a miracle he didn't shoot us on the walk, but now, looking up at my master's furious face and whip, I kind of wish he had.

*The Man Who Finds Them:*

I don't remember much of last night. I came into the forest to catch a deer (or, with my luck, a squirrel) and ended up face-to-face with the runaway slaves I saw posters of. I remember laughing and scaring them into coming with me, back to their master. I remember the walk back. I had scared them, probably something along the lines of me turning around to look at them, waving my gun and making empty threats while giggling. I remember walking out of the forest, head pounding, and demanding that the slaves tell

me where Russell's plantation was so I could bring them back there, and then getting handed a fistful of cash. I remember feeling bad for the slaves because they were people, but only for about five seconds before laughing at myself. And most of all, I remember the sound of a whip and a young girl's scream, and having to remind myself once again that they weren't people—just property.

## **This Is It**

Esme Brayshaw

*Matilda:*

Today I woke up and I knew it was time. I could smell the freedom and hear the sound of footsteps running free through the meadow. I couldn't really remember how we had done it, but what I did know was that nobody was stopping me and my father now. The last week was very hard and I lost three family members while trying to escape from the plantation. I can still remember the sound of my mother's scream as the evil white man stabbed a knife right through her back.

The crazy rollercoaster all began on the night of the escape. I wouldn't go to bed; I was to stay up and meet my mother and father at the bunk house. As I got closer, I couldn't hear my own footsteps; all I heard was myself saying, *This is it. This is it.* The moment I saw my mother and looked right into her eyes, that's when I knew that after tonight all my fears would go away. We all ran into the woods. A few minutes after we met at the bunkhouse, we were running for our lives. We had a map all set for our travel to the free states. I had to read the map 'cause I'm the only one who can read. We passed by a tree I always used to look at when I was farming, and for some reason that night it looked different.

"We're here!" my father yelled as me and my mother jumped. It was a little ditch in the ground; I started staring at it and then I realized, it's a wagon. "Pa, look, it's a wagon." We uncovered the wagon and Pa started to assemble it, giving me a little smile every time he saw me watching him. We took the wagon for a little while but it started to get heavy for Pa, and he made Ma take over. That's when my brother Malcolm said, "Horc. Horc." "What in God's name are you trying to say?" my mother said. "Ma, I think he's trying to say 'horse.' Look." I pointed up the hill where I saw some figures that looked like horses. My father got excited 'cause this meant he wouldn't have to pull the wagon. So we started walking toward the horses. There were people guarding them so we had to be sneaky.

**BONK!** "Malcolm!" my mother screamed, because he had fallen on his head. Now the white man heard us and turned around. "Run!" my father yelled. We all ran. I could hear my heart beating out of my chest. That's when I heard the most dreadful noise ever. There were three shots fired at us. Luckily the first one missed but the second two hit



my brothers and they were both killed. My knees were shaking and I felt like I was going to drown in all my tears. My father grabbed me and my mother ran right behind us. As soon as we got far enough away, I collapsed. I was in shock. My two brothers had just been shot. My father told me it would be alright and that we will be free soon and that's the only thing that kept me from stopping and giving up. "Here, Matilda. Come here." My dad gave me a boost and I jumped on the wagon which the horse was already attached to. The ride after that was dull and uneventful without my brothers. "Wow," I said as we bounced over a rock, or at least I thought it was rock. We slowed down and Pa climbed out of the wagon and put his hand on his head and got back in the wagon and started moving very quickly. "What is it?" Ma said. Pa didn't respond.

"Well, well, well, who do we have here?" A strange white man was in front of our wagon now and he had a gun which was a little bent, I think because that's what we'd run over. "It's my lucky day," he said, smiling an ugly smile. "Now you fellas come with me and I'll wait to kill ya," he snickered. We went with him, not wanting to be killed. We had been walking a little while and all of a sudden I saw Ma jump at the man. She grabbed his gun and threw it to Pa. She tried to get away but the man had a grip on her. "You shouldn't have done that..." All I saw next was Ma fall to her knees and Pa shooting the evil white man. I don't remember anything after that except waking up with three family members dead. I had this feeling inside me; it was sad but also angry. I had finally realized why I was running. I was running for my family.

## **I Want To Be Free**

Leila Albellman

*Matilda:*

My mother shakes me; this wakes me up. Mama taught me the plan of escape about a month ago. If you're reading this, you might be wondering, *Why run away?* The reason for this is that we were tired of being treated like garbage. As we run through the field, I start to wonder what will they do once they found out we left. We don't know where we're heading. Anywhere, anywhere away from here. We walk for a long time. I just want to sleep. Fielding realizes this, so he puts me on his shoulders. After a couple of hours of walking, we are all hungry so we look for something to eat. A couple of minutes later we find a tavern. We walk into the tavern to find a nice-looking, tired lady. She walks toward us as dad is going on about how we have to be quick. I hope we make it up north in time...

*The White Woman Reading the Poster:*

I'm just about to finish my shift at the tavern, when a family of five walks in. I decide to be their waitress because staying at the tavern is a better option than staying at home doing nothing. As I start to approach their table, I hear the older man saying, "We have

to be quick here so no one catches us. We have to move quickly in order to get there on time.” Me being the curious person that I am, I have to ask, “Where are you guys heading?” They look at each other, scared. They look at me with wide eyes. “Um, up north,” they reply quietly. Once I give them their check, they pay immediately and leave. On my way home I see a poster and decide to read it. It’s about the family...the family of five. I decide to go find them, not to turn them in, but to travel with them because I’m tired of going through the motions of daily life. I think I want to help them but what I do know for sure is that I want to be free.

## **Vengeance**

Waskar Cruz

I see my fellow brothers and sisters, my family, being shackled onto the ship. I want to rip out of my chains and take everyone off this ship and back to our beautiful village. I know that there is nowhere else to go at this point, but once I am free, I will go on a vendetta against all of these white men who have me chained. For all of the pushing, pulling, and whipping, not only me but the hundreds of other slaves on this ship, I will have vengeance. I feel pain, sadness, and fear because I’m afraid I might never see my family again. It makes me want to break down and cry but I can’t because the man behind me is whipping me and telling me to keep walking. I hear the cries for help, pain, and agony overwhelming my own surroundings, even under the ship keeping us in the dark because we can be strong in numbers. I smell the sweat, blood, and body odor of everyone and everything around me. The bottoms of my feet are covered in not just my blood but everyone’s, dripping down from their backs after the lashes these men are giving us. It almost hurts my nose, the strong smell of sweat and fear of all these people, especially mine because I don’t know what awaits me in the dark space under the ship. It sounds like hell.

## **When We Are Free**

Alexander Tate Freeland

*Washington:*

“Okay, ready? Go. We need to be quick!” I say in a loud whisper. My oldest son starts up the tree and in no time he is at the top. I give the signal and he jumps from the tree to a small tool shed next to it, just a little bit taller than the fence. Then up goes my daughter, then my wife, and then I pick up my youngest son, Malcolm, half-asleep, and put him on my back. I look around to see if anyone has seen us yet. I do not see anyone

and start up the tree. At the top, I position myself to jump when Malcolm cries out in pain!

*William:*

I grab my gun, coat, and cane and start hobbling toward the cry I just heard. The slaves are just being rambunctious, I think to myself. I look at the tree next to the tool shed and see three figures crouching, slowly lowering a variety of items to the ground from the fence with a rope. Then I look at the tree next to it and see one of my slaves, Washington, I think, and watch as he throws over a small parcel that cries out in midair. It's the boy, I think. Then I turn my attention back to Washington. I take out my pistol and carefully take aim. As he jumps, I fire, the bullet hits his foot and he plummets straight down. As fast as my old legs can take me, I walk over to Washington, and when I reach him, out of breath, I lift the cane over my head and smash it down on Washington's face. "Washington!" cries out a figure on the shed, probably Mary. As I look back at Washington, I feel a very swift leg coming between mine, and the next thing I know, I'm on my knees with Washington standing over me. He picks up my cane slowly, then brings it quickly down on my face.

I wake up in my bed, my family surrounding me. "Oh, he's awake. Shhh, don't speak," says my wife, holding my head in her hands. I try to say something, anything, but I can't. I have no teeth.

*Washington:*

"Hey, Dad? Why did you hurt Mr. William?" Matilda asks. "He was nice and gave us food, water, and clothes." "Yes, Dear," I tell her as I try to start the fire. "He was sometimes nice. But he raped your mother and beat Fielding, but the worst thing he did was cut off one of my old friend's arms." "Washington!" yelled my wife at me angrily. "What? They deserve the truth." I pick up the sticks and start the fire. My family is silent. "Okay, here's the plan," I say. "Tomorrow we have to walk five miles, then we will meet Mr. Tom. Is that good?" But everyone is already asleep. "I'm sorry," I whisper. I get a blanket from my pack and drape it over the rest of my family and sit in front of the fire, wondering what will happen to my family and I.

The next morning we erase all evidence of the fire and start the five-mile walk. I carry the half-awake Malcolm, and he whispers to me, "Daddy the dinosaur man," before going back to sleep. Matilda and Fielding carry some packs while my wife carries our next child—the other children don't know it yet, but it will be a nice surprise when we are free.

## **What Sickness**

Emmet L. Gebb

As the waves crash, the seagulls squawk and land is near. The thumping excitement in my body telling me I am finally home and the journey has come to an end—even though the feeling of remorse for these abused beings lessens the triumph I feel, seeing my home land. The feeling of the ocean breeze through my hair and the wood under my hands. Since I'm close to land, I won't have to eat so many lemons to stay healthy; then I can see my family. Oh, what joy I have. There will be no more smells of sweat, blood, and bowel movements, and the roughage of language, to be freed of the terror here. I won't see the same old scenery from sailing for months; the dead slaves floating, the sharks following, and the sails and masts. The captain will be gone and I'll be rid of his ordering and the sound of whip on slave. And, most annoyingly, the same old tune on the sound box! But here I am with no wants and no dreams, just to work as a sailor with no other intention. Just to find reason in the light and darkness created to form this world, and to come to peace from the troubles of this world...what sickness.

## **More Than We Can Bear**

Aurela Gjonbalaj

*Washington:*

I look back, making sure all of my children are behind me. I bolt for the trees with burning anger in my heart. The warmth of the sun can only do so much in making me want to tread farther. The thought of my children being able to roam free, and not have a dark past like me is what kept me going. The thought of my owner catching ahold of me and my family deeply sickens me. Although I may not have much more life left to live, I wish to lend my children whatever I can give. Although I'm sure the white men are following me, I will do anything for the wellness of my family. I shall keep running through the sun-lit trees. I try to keep steady, running with ease.

*Malcolm:*

My legs can only take me so far, as the beginning of a new day starts. I try to keep a good grasp on Matilda's hand as I run through the dirt mixed with sand. My father looks distressed as the sunrise turns to sunset. I ask Matilda, "What if Daddy can't make it? Will Daddy be able to take it?" She replied with a soft "No" that came after a sigh, "No, definitely not. After all, Mommy is all Daddy's got." I ran back to Mommy as my feet began to wear. This is beginning to become more than we can bear.

## **White Man Wants More Money**

Jason He

I see slaves going down stairs, standing up and crouching  
or sitting down because they have nothing better to do  
The sound of slaves moaning and cries of pain are ringing in my ear  
The scent of blood gushing out of their backs from whipping  
and their sweat from the hot sunshine fills my nose  
while trying to breathe in fresh air  
I feel the floorboards that I stand on and the pole I'm leaning on  
I feel happy that I will be able to have a lot of slaves to sell  
and get tons of money  
Wanting to get ahold of many more slaves, I want to make a lot of money  
selling the slaves  
Afraid of the slaves getting killed  
afraid I might lose some slaves, as well as the money  
Dreaming of money, money, and more money,  
I will get more slaves  
till I'm full of money

## **Dreams Turn Dark**

Mateo Inclan

"My name's Malcolm," I keep tellin' myself. I'm so scared, I can't remember who or where I am. Mama says everything gonna be fine. I hope so, though I don't really believe her, though. Papa is sweatin' a mighty lot. I can see it, and the white man drivin' keeps looking back behind us. "I'm worried," I tell Mama. She just stays real quiet-like. I can smell the sweat. "Malcolm, honey, there's nothing to worry about," Mama says, but she looks worried. At the plantation, Mama got whipped. Papa, he got whipped. Fielding got paddled. I see other slaves that got punished even worse, an' all these thoughts, I can feel 'em swirling around in my head, and then I fall asleep. And my dreams turn dark.

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The saloon's crowded. I haven't ordered nothin' yet, and the bartender, he's givin' me the eye. I look at the ad and my eyes go wide. My head shoots up. I'm lookin' 'round—no one else has the paper. An odd occurrence, though it's only two o'clock, so there's not too many folks around. A gruff voice interrupts my thinkin', "Hey, pal, you gonna order somethin'?" I'm flat broke, so I say, "Sorry," and he says, "Well then, git." So I go, but I collect some money from a fine lookin' lady's purse first, then I find the cryer boy and I pay him the money and say, "Don't sell no more papers today." I pay him the

amount he'd have gotten, then I head on my way after dumping the papers in a water trough. I'm a slave hunter. Two hundred's a lot of money for a few people, but for one guy, oh boy, for one guy, it's a fortune. I get saddled up and head out, no one but the horse and my gun with me. The only smell, a stench of fear on the wind.

## **Darkness**

Victor Marsh

I see other slaves on the floor as I sit down. This makes me sad to see all these others suffer. I hear the slave-trader talking and this fills me with anger because they are talking about me and the other slaves. I smell sweat and blood. I feel anger at the traders for capturing me and the other slaves with me, because we just went through what no human or animal should ever have to go through. I want to be off of this ship because the slave traders have already whipped me twice. I remember my family and my old village. I'm afraid of these slave traders because I've never seen them before. They look very strange to me, and I do not know what they're going to do to me. I dream of being in my old village because it reminds me of the little happiness I have inside. I think of these people and how much they've done to me and the other slaves. And how much I want revenge on them.

## **I Want**

Sofia O'Malley

As I am being forced down the stairs, I see my fellow Africans chained down. I don't know why we are in these chains. I just know I want to get out of the darkness. I want to break free. I smell the salty air from the ocean breeze along with the stench of blood and vomit. The cries of terror and pain cause my ears to ring as families get ripped apart. I hear the tongue of the white man yelling orders above with the planks creaking below their feet with every step. I want to go back; no, I need to go back home where everything is calm and I am sane. I want to go back in time. I hate that I don't know what lies ahead, what I can't see or know. I'm terrified, yet curious of what will happen in the future. I remember my past, both good and bad moments. Wishing I could go back home where it is calm, safe, and at peace. I want to go back in time like when I sleep and dream of seeing my family one last time.

## **Afraid**

Riley Raff

I look below, and all there is is darkness.

I am afraid. The waves splash against the moving beast.

I am afraid.

They push me below and the scent of death fills my nose.

I am afraid. I wish for love.

I am too afraid to think. It seems that death has come to me.

I ask the question, *Am I afraid? Or are my senses fooling me, and all of us?*

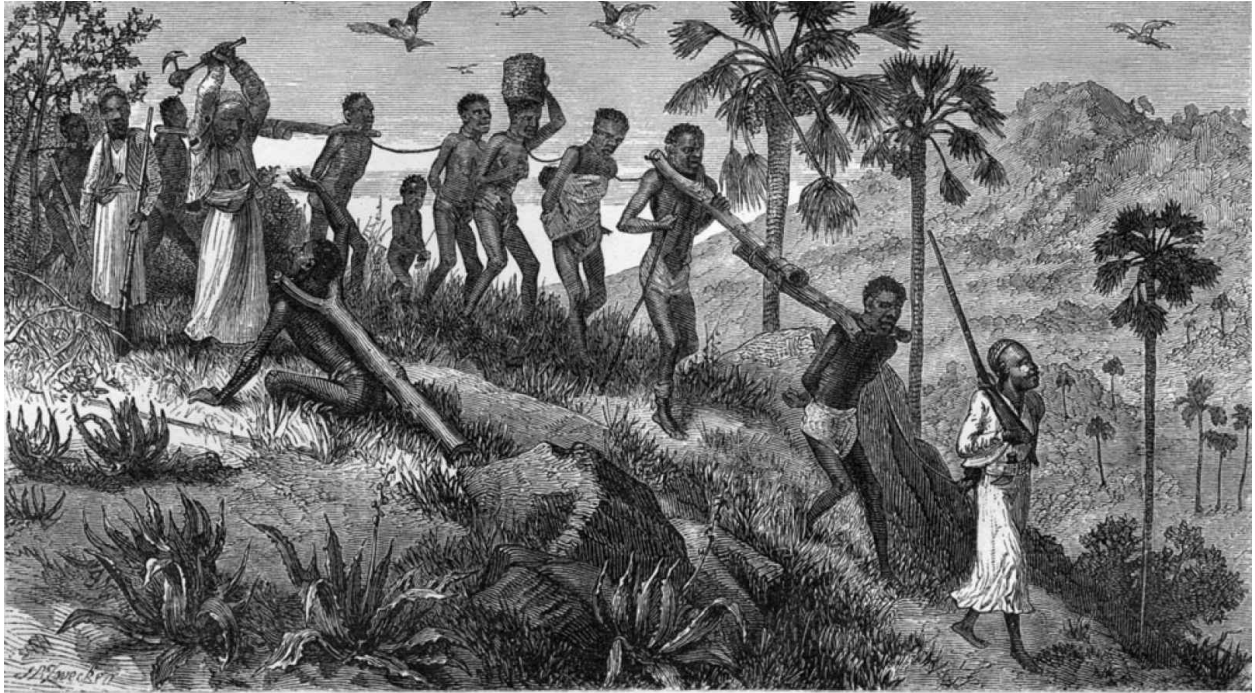




# Mr. Holthusen

## Class 7B





## All He Wants

Catalina Diaz

He sees other slaves walking  
He sees the trees and the birds  
He hears the footsteps of the other people  
He hears a man screaming for help  
because one of the slave keepers is about to kill him  
He smells the plants and the trees  
He smells the stink of the other slaves  
He feels the splinters of the yoke  
cutting into the back of his neck  
He feels nervous and sad  
All he wants is freedom  
and to be with his family

## **I Will Be Free**

Ruilin Yang

I see a man in front of me holding an ax and trying to kill me, and people tied to each other so they can't run away. The sound of people crying and screaming makes me want to rip my ears off. The smell of human waste makes me want to throw up because it smells so bad. I feel scared because this man is trying to kill me with an ax because I'm always slowing down the group. The back of my neck hurts because this yoke is rubbing my skin off. While I'm walking on this journey, I'm always thinking about the good times I had with my family, and of trying to escape. Every time we have time to rest, I dream that one day I will be free and go back to my family. But I know now that it will never happen.

# \$200 Reward.

RANAWAY from the subscriber, on the night of Thursday, the 30th of September.

## FIVE NEGRO SLAVES,

To-wit: one Negro man, his wife, and three children.

The man is a black negro, full height, very erect, his face a little thin. He is about forty years of age, and calls himself *Washington Reed*, and is known by the name of *Washington*. He is probably well dressed, possibly takes with him an ivory headed cane, and is of good address. Several of his teeth are gone.

*Mary*, his wife, is about thirty years of age, a bright mulatto woman, and quite stout and strong.

The oldest of the children is a boy, of the name of *FIELDING*, twelve years of age, a dark mulatto, with heavy eyelids. He probably wore a new cloth cap.

*MATILDA*, the second child, is a girl, six years of age, rather a dark mulatto, but a bright and smart looking child.

*MALCOLM*, the youngest, is a boy, four years old, a lighter mulatto than the last, and about equally as bright. He probably also wore a cloth cap. If examined, he will be found to have a swelling at the navel.

*Washington* and *Mary* have lived at or near St. Louis, with the subscriber, for about 15 years.

It is supposed that they are making their way to Chicago, and that a white man accompanies them, that they will travel chiefly at night, and most probably in a covered wagon.

A reward of \$150 will be paid for their apprehension, so that I can get them, if taken within one hundred miles of St. Louis, and \$200 if taken beyond that, and secured so that I can get them, and other reasonable additional charges, if delivered to the subscriber, or to *THOMAS ALLEN, Esq.*, at St. Louis, Mo. The above negroes, for the last few years, have been in possession of *Thomas Allen, Esq.*, of St. Louis.

**WM. RUSSELL.**

ST. LOUIS, Oct. 1, 1847.

### To Be Brave

Elizabeth Fernando

*Matilda:*

All my life I have been forced to work for a man who I don't even like. Every part of my body is shaking. My mom thinks I am cold so she hugs me so tight so I will not be cold when we lay down. I can hear my mom's heart beating so fast. The first thing that came to my head was that she was full of fear, just like me. We heard a noise outside. We were scared that it was the Master, but it was my father.

*Washington:*

*I have an idea to escape and run away from the master*, I told my family. I was afraid that it was going to be a bad idea—what if someone gets left behind? I was so afraid, but I had to be brave in front of my kids to give them strength to not be afraid and to say yes to escape. I have been so afraid of the Master my whole life. But I have to take a stand and leave the Master for us not to be full of fear our whole life.

## **We Made It**

Anibal Flores

*Matilda:*

My heart is beating but my mom said don't stop running no matter what happens. This is why; because in the plantation the man whipped us and treated us poorly. Also, I hear everyone breathing heavily because we were tired, but we still make an effort to run, even though these legs are killing us. After a while, my dad says, "Here he is." It was a mysterious white man. My dad said the man didn't like to treat people like our owner treated us, but I was still suspicious.

*Malcolm:*

As we left the plantation, my mom and dad and the three of us went running. This is why: we had to witness the other slaves getting whipped and punished because they didn't obey or refused to do something. I was running too slow, so my mom picked me up in her arms. As we ran, my mom was breathing heavily in my ear because she was carrying me and we were running fast. "We made it," my dad said. A mysterious man came and helped us make it out of the city. He was a white, so for a second I thought it was a trap—or maybe not all whites are bad.

## **Until We Could Run No More**

Rachel Garcia

*Mary:*

We planned this escape for days, weeks, probably months. We had to be careful not to get caught, but other slaves already knew what we were doing; I thought that they were going to turn us in. We had to think fast, think of the future of our children, Fielding, Matilda, Malcolm. We decided that the next day, we would go. As soon as it got dark, we got ready. Matilda and Malcolm were still asleep; we had to carry them. Washington went first, then the rest of us. We ran and ran and ran and never stopped. We ran until we couldn't run no more. We stopped by a river to freshen up. Malcolm was staring at me with his eyes wide open, jaw open too. "What's wrong, Malcolm?" I whispered. He just kept staring, pointing behind me. Washington does the same, Malcolm starts to cry, Matilda's still asleep. I turned around very slowly—there's a guy behind me, not black, but white.

*Matilda:*

I hear a scream—it's so loud. I jump up to see trees, water, and a white man standing behind my mom. Everyone's staring at the white man now, but I'm confused. Who are you? What are we doing here? Why is it night? These are the questions I want to ask but I don't want to disturb the silence. The man says, "I'm not going to turn you in, neither am I going to tell you my name." He held out his hand; my father shook it. "I will help you on your journey, but we shall go to New York, since it's the best place for you all." Willingly, we followed him along the side of the road. As soon as he stopped, we stopped. "Hide in the bushes, now!" he whispered. We hesitated, but Dad grabbed my hand, I grabbed Fielding's hand, then he grabbed my mom's hand, and she was holding Malcolm. As we hid deep in the bushes, we could hear him say, "Hello, men. How's the night watch?" They responded, "Not well. We lost five slaves and are forced to find them." We saw the white man look behind him. "I'll let you know if I see anyone, boys. Bye." We waited until they were long gone before we came out. It took a long time before reaching New York. We said thanks to the mystery man and went into the village and got settled into an apartment. I said with a smile, "I think I'm going to like it here," and everyone agreed.

## **Here To Help Us**

Juan L. Abreu

*Washington:*

I bit my lip tight until it hurt, then I grabbed Matilda's hand and out of the cabin we go. We start running as fast as we can. I could see Mary and the boys behind us. We leave the compound; Matilda looked tired, so I picked her up and carried her. Three minutes later, we see this white man. I put Matilda down and almost attacked him until he said, "Hey, my wagon is nearby...need a ride?" "Oh, I'm sorry...thank you so much," I said to him, panting. We get in the wagon. I said to Mary, "It's okay. He's here to help us." So then Mary and the boys and Matilda hop on and we head north.

*Malcolm:*

I see Mommy hugging me tight which is making me a little scared. Mommy carries me out of the cabin. I see Daddy running ahead of us and I also see Matilda running. Me and Mommy are running; I hear crying on the other side of Mommy and it's my brother. He lost his breath, and we stop while Daddy goes ahead. Two minutes later, we start running again, then I see Daddy. I cried and cried because I was so happy to see Daddy and Matilda. Then we see this white man. Daddy says, "It's okay. He's here to help us." After that, we get in the wagon and leave.

## **The Truth**

Ivan Degtyarev

*Master:*

From the day I bought him  
to the day that I lost him  
I always fought him  
I used to trust him  
But then, in just one moment  
He ran away into the woods.  
I want my slaves to come back  
I'll treat them better than I did

*Washington:*

From the day that I was sold  
to the day that I escaped  
I saw his slaves get cold  
and others getting raped  
He wishes we would come back  
but the truth is that we're not

## **A Better Life**

Yeury Garcia

*Slave Owner:*

I need to get that slave back because that slave cost a lot of money. I paid \$300 for him! He also has children, and they will be my future slaves. They must work for me! And that girl, she will be the next breeder so she can make babies and they will be more slaves. But now that they've escaped, none of that will happen. He will go to Chicago because it is closest to the farm. I'm going to Chicago to get them back! When I get them back, I am going to whip them.

*Slave Father:*

I need to escape because I see my children working. I need to give a better life to my children. They need to be free. That white man from the north is going to help us. So me and my family have to prepare to escape at night. When we escape, we will go to Chicago because it's close and slaves can be free there. Also, I am worried about my

daughter, that they will mistreat her, so that is why I want to escape. No master will ever touch my girl.

## **No Matter What**

Julia Klein

*Matilda:*

One night my dad had gotten a harsh whipping from Mr, Russell. It was so bad, the marks gave me scary nightmares. Later in the middle of the night, our parents were talking about how to escape. I listened to every word, then I woke up my brothers and sisters and I told them; I exaggerated a little. So the next night, when our parents told us, our plan sprang into action. My dad took my two brothers and I went with my mother. My dad and two brothers made it through the guards and dogs and escaped. My mother and I were running; we almost didn't make it. The dogs were chasing us, but luckily, we did make it.

*The Slave Owner, William Russell:*

I woke up the next morning and said to myself, *I'm going to check on my slaves*. As I was walking to the quarters, I saw people were working. When I finally made it to the shack, I saw they were gone. I started screaming and destroying everything in that old rusty shack. Then I ran to the house to get the guards. I yelled, "My slaves are missing! Find them and don't come back until you do, or I will kill you!" So the guards went out on their horses and started looking for Matilda and her family. But I kept screaming and destroying things, breaking glass, kicking objects across the room, throwing things that would crack and break. I felt like I could not stop. I said to myself, *I'm going to get those slaves back, no matter what. And when I do, I will get my revenge*.

## **My Life Is So Crazy**

Leurys Abreu

*Slave Owner:*

I just started to notice when the slaves were missing. I told the other people, "Find them," but they told me that the slaves had escaped. I was so mad. I looked everywhere—they really did escape. I wonder how they escaped. I don't get it—it is almost impossible to escape. I want to get revenge on them for escaping. When I find them, they will be in pain. I hate it that they escaped because I can't buy other slaves; they are too expensive. They made a fool of me by escaping. I am so embarrassed that I did not notice.



### *12-Year-Old Slave Kid:*

My life is so crazy. I just escaped with other people who are just like me. But nobody wants to tell me where we are going. Everybody keeps treating me like I am still a little kid. Everybody keeps telling me to run, but not telling me *where* to run.

### **So We Ran**

Ciara Fajardo

#### *Fielding:*

I feel nervous that I might get caught and separated from my family. We are in the woods, trying to escape. My heart is pounding fast as light. Only 'cause we are so far we can get free and since we left at night; you don't know what could happen. Later on, we were stopped by a mysterious white man. I was very scared, thinking that I would get separated from my family. My parents, Washington and Mary, both had a frightened face. The white man was talking to my parents with a mean look. I couldn't quite hear them right, but I heard the white man say the word "separated." That's when my life changed.

#### *Mary:*

I'm running as fast as possible. Malcolm is in my arms, Matilda is in Washington's arms, and Fielding is running across from me. I feel Malcolm's heart beating against mine. My heart is beating as fast as light. All I see are the trees, but it's getting more blurry by the second. I'm dashing through the woods. Malcolm starts to cry; I don't understand why. We stop so I can keep Malcolm calm. Suddenly, a mysterious white man appears. He has a conversation with me and Washington, but mostly talks with Washington. I hear, "Your family has to be separated from the slave owners." I was so relieved that he helped us instead of capturing us. So we ran. Far, far away.

### **We Have To Run Faster**

Brian Gonzalez

#### *Slave Owner:*

I see that my slaves have left. I feel that someone helped them escape. I hear that no one is working. If I find them, I will whip them. I feel nervous and worried that someone

took them and is going to sell them. When I see those slaves, I'm going to kill them. They should be scared. They should be working for me now! Who is going to help me?!

*The Slave Kid:*

I see that the white man is leading the way. I hear footsteps. I think we are going to go a long way from the house. I want to be home with my family and play around. I can't feel my feet—I have walked a long way. I feel that we are going to get caught! It's going to be dark, and we have to run faster.

### **I Don't Have a Choice**

Marcelle Guilbet

What I don't understand is why they would leave me. I get that I am a bit lazy and strict, but it's not my fault. I can feel my forehead sweating. I'm thinking, *If they are gone for good, how will I be able to find new slaves at this rate? They might as well escape and walk out on me as well.* I see crops in the field starting to look bad since nobody is working on them. I would obviously yell at them and whip them; I don't want to, but I don't have a choice.

### **My Name Is Mary**

Ryen Jones

My name is Mary. I am a woman slave. My life is getting very complicated and scary now that me and my family have run away. I am still quite confused about how a mysterious white man knows my husband and if this is all a game. We are currently resting under a tree. Our feet are all messed up from punishments and our legs are wilted from getting whipped. As I rest against the tree, I close my eyes and a million thoughts and questions run through my head. I wonder if this is a trap, if this is all just a way to steal slaves. I wonder if we are just going to end up back in slavery. We are off to who knows where, and I am scared. I am scared because I am left with so many unanswered questions. It's making me quiver. I am shaking and I smell something burning: I open my eyes and there is my husband shaking me, I hear men's voices and dogs barking. I get up and collect myself. And RUN.

## **We Had To Move Fast**

Briana Marte

*Washington:*

I'm Washington. Me and my family escaped slavery. When we left, it was a very big risk. We could only take a few things with us. I told my family we could take food and one extra outfit; everything else would have to stay behind. My wife understood right away, but it took a while to explain to the kids that we were not able to take everything. I noticed that Matilda understood after a while, but not the two boys. All I heard was the boys begging to take everything. I did not enjoy it, but me and my wife screamed at them to put all their things down. They were scared to get caught, so we ran as fast as possible because we were running out of time before they came to check up on us; then we would get caught.

*Matilda:*

I'm Matilda, and I have gone through a lot. One hard time I have gone through was when me and my family ran away. It was not only hard because we could not get caught, but also because we could not take all of our things, and I did not understand why. I thought running away was going to be fun, that we would have freedom and be happy. I was right about the freedom, but not the happy part. Everything was good, up to the part where we could not take all of our things. I did not understand why. After a while, my father explained why. I kind of understood. He said it was because we had to move fast, and it was hard to go from place to place with everything. He said we could only take an outfit. I finally understood, so we left.

## **When There Is No Freedom**

Nathaniel Marte

When there is no freedom  
people fight.  
Where there is no freedom  
there is depression.

When freedom comes to town  
everyone is happy.  
When freedom comes to town  
slavery stops.  
When freedom comes to town  
everything is calm.

## **We Must Run**

Rileigh McDonald

*Washington:*

Living and working as a slave on a plantation is very hard. Our Master would always threaten us; sometimes he would actually go through with it. But what happened today was the last straw. I forgot to feed the horses, so he made plans to sell off my daughter, Matilda. She's being taken away tomorrow, so we must run away tonight.

*Matilda:*

I don't want to be sold. I want to stay with my family. What would I do without them? Dad is talking with my Mom. I think they're making plans, but for what? I go to sleep and forget about the whole thing...until I'm woken up later. It's Dad! What does he want? He tells me to be quiet. "We're escaping tonight!" he whispers. I fill with joy...and a bit of nervousness.

*Washington:*

I pick up Matilda, who quickly falls asleep in my arms. Mary is carrying baby Malcolm inside a blanket and Fielding is ready to run. We hop the fence, making as little noise as possible. After running for what seems like hours on end, I hear...

*Matilda:*

I wake back up to the sound of horns, barking dogs, and horses. My dad is carrying me. He's running as fast as he can. I say, "I think they're close." My dad yells to hide in the bushes. I run to Mama with the baby. We hide behind a big rock. Dad and Malcolm are in a bush. Oh no! I see...

*Washington:*

There they are. Matilda is peeking over the rock. I signal her to put her head down. Stay...completely...still.

*Matilda:*

I can't see him. But I can hear him. And I sure can smell him. The Master clears his throat and says something. I can't hear him that well. What if he saw us?

*Washington:*

He says, "Well, we've come far enough. Let's go, son." I sigh in relief. "*What was that?!*" Maybe I was too loud. "Maybe just the wind, Pop. I'm tired. Let's go," says his son. How lucky we are.

*Matilda:*

He almost caught us. But Daddy doesn't know I am friends with the Master's son. I winked at him, and he told his dad to give up. I've always liked him. They leave and we start running again. Then, right when we think we're safe...

*Washington:*

"Who are you?" a mysterious white man said. I told him we're trying to get to Chicago. He offers us a horse and leads us there. I trusted him. We are very thankful.

## **The Man Who Wanted Freedom**

Briana Melendez

*Washington:*

It was just another night. Today was a long day of work. I've got a good idea. When my day was over I pulled my wife outside my house and asked her how she felt about escaping. She thought I was insane, then she agreed. Mary was nervous about how we were going to do it along with our children because there is no way I am leaving our children by themselves. I've decided that I will leave first, find some help, and return for my family. I told my family about it and they let me go. I told them if I don't make it back before sunrise to move on with their lives and don't try to escape. Then I left. I looked to make sure no one was there. Then I ran. After about two miles, I heard bells. This might be the end for the father of three. The husband. The man who wanted freedom.

*Fielding:*

My dad just left. I looked at Malcolm and Matilda. They had tears in their eyes because they were worried about Father. He scared us with his choice of words. He said if he didn't return, to move on and don't escape. Did he mean if he died? I looked at mother and she had her hands covering her face. She was crying. I didn't know what to do because, when it comes to emotions, I am not the best person. Now, everyone is in tears. Not me, though. Like I said, not good with my own emotions. Seconds later, I start to tear up. I'm worried. Will Father come back?

## **We Won't Fall**

Yerson Ortiz

When there is no freedom  
we lose control  
we fight for our rights  
we work hard to get it  
there is no purpose  
we have depression  
we lose hope

When freedom comes  
we will celebrate  
we will finally do what we want to do  
we won't have pressure  
we won't fall

## **Far Away From Here**

Jacob Pavia

*Matilda:*

We just had to escape; then we found a guy all in white, and he had a covered wagon, so it was the perfect situation.

*Fielding:*

I was with my Dad and Mom, and my little sister. We found some guy with white skin; he was in his covered wagon. We asked for help. He told us that he would help us. In return, he wanted money! We told him we would pay him back, but that he should take us far away from here. He agreed. We are now in his debt.

## **Because We Wanted To Be Free**

Angelica Pena

*Washington:*

When me and my wife Mary were in the cabin, it was so quiet and peaceful as we saw the kids sleeping. As me and Mary were talking next to the fireplace, we heard the owls

hooting and slaves speaking. It was not so peaceful now because Mary and I were thinking about escaping, but we weren't willing to risk our kids. As we were talking about escaping, we said that we needed to find someone who would help us escape out of this misery. We left that same night and hid because we saw this white guy with a big hat. He saw us and said, "Hey, what are you two doing out here?" We were so scared that, by accident, I told him that we were escaping. I was shaking like an earthquake. Me and Mary woke up the kids and started running fast as a lightning bolt so nothing terrible could happen to our family.

*Mary:*

While I was holding Malcolm because he was so tired, I was wondering if we were going to make it out of the plantation. When we finally escaped with the kids, Fielding was asking me questions. My heart was beating fast. It felt like there was no hope. As we were running fast, tired and sweaty, we were passing all these trees. I heard sounds; leaves, crickets, and footsteps. It was raining and I heard a gunshot. The kids were crying, and I sang my lullaby. This was scary. Me and Washington were not tired at all because we wanted to be free. I was whispering to Matilda while she was holding a leaf that was dying, and that's when she told me it represented her friend back at the plantation.

## **Do You Want To Be Free?**

Elvis Pena

*Dad:*

Well, a white man came into my quarters and asked me, "Do you want to be free?" I replied, "Yes," with a big smile. He told me to meet him at night in my quarters with my family. That night, he told me to go north into the forest, and there is a bush covering a passageway to a place called Chicago where I hear that slaves can be free.

*Boy:*

My Daddy saw this white man in his quarters, and I was hiding under the bed. I was hearing everything they were saying. My Daddy said, "Why should I trust you?" "Because I can help you be free." After that, late at night me and my family were running like a pack of wolves. We found this green bush, and behind it was a hole. I was afraid to go down, but I had to. It was so dark. I could feel the wind as I ran. When I reached the end of the tunnel, I was free.

## **The Trail To Freedom**

Alexa Ramos

One night I woke up from a bad dream of my master whipping my wife. I'd just had enough of this torture. I quietly woke up my wife and our three kids and I explained what I was thinking about, how escaping could be our freedom. It could be the solution to all our problems. My wife was very scared of what might happen. We all left our cabin and quietly went to a trail that we all knew was the trail to freedom. We weren't allowed to go through this trail. It was forbidden. As we speed-walk through this trail, we see someone. I see that it's a white man, so me and my wife immediately panic. I push my kids into the bush so the white man won't see them. The white man walks up to me and Mary. I push Mary behind me to protect her. The white man says to follow him, that he will lead us to freedom. We follow him because he is the only hope we've got. Mary gives me a worried look. I reassure her that it's going to be okay. We get the kids and follow the white man down the trail with a worried feeling in the back of my head.

---

I woke up to my father rapidly shaking me. I look out the window to see darkness instead of daylight. I asked what was going on, and my father told me everything will be okay, just to wake up my younger siblings. I really didn't believe everything was okay, because my Momma had a worried look on her face. My father told us that we were leaving, and on the way we had to be very quiet. All five of us walked quickly across the fields to this scary-looking trail. The trail was dark and very quiet. As we're walking, I hear my Momma gasp. I look in the distance and see a tall figure. Next thing I knew, me and my siblings are getting pushed into the bushes. It was my father with a finger on his lips, signaling us to stay quiet. I nodded and held onto both of my siblings' hands. I heard some talking, but I couldn't manage to figure out what they were saying. A couple of seconds later, my father gets us out of the bushes and we all start following this mysterious white guy. My siblings hold onto Momma and I hold onto my father, hoping for the best.

## **When Freedom Comes**

Jonathan Reyes

Where there is no freedom  
people starve  
Where there is no freedom  
there is no happiness in the air  
Where there is no freedom  
there are no rights  
Where there is no freedom  
people are living in the streets



When freedom comes  
people are very happy  
When freedom comes  
everyone gets to eat  
When freedom comes  
there is no one to boss you around  
When freedom comes  
people are living in their own homes

## **Never Go Back**

Eliani Rubio

One night I woke up from a bad dream about my slaves turning on me and taking control. When I went to check on them, there was not a sign of them anywhere. The house was so quiet. I thought they would come back after a while, but they didn't. I then decided to try to find them. I went out and started putting out "missing" posters with a reward. The only reason I'm going to all this effort is because even though they are nothing to me, they still cost lots of money and I need them back.

---

My name is Matilda. Me and my family ran away late at night from the master. I was glad to be out of that place, but I was also scared. I kept wondering what would happen if he found us, and if we would have to go back with him and do what he says. My brothers Malcolm and Fielding also looked scared. I wondered if my siblings were wondering the same things that I was. I wanted to be far from there and never go back, but I also didn't want to get in trouble, even though I thought that this would be the best choice for me and my family, to have better lives and better futures.

## **Happy To Leave**

Jenifer Salas

I overheard my mom and dad talking about leaving the plantation. *Finally*, I said in my head. I was happy to leave because I wanted to go to school. Slaves like me were not allowed to read or write. Later that day, my mom told us that we were leaving. In my mind, I was thinking about being a normal child for once. It was night time and we said our goodbyes. My mom, my dad, and my two brothers headed off into the woods. During most of the time, I was tired. In the middle of the woods, we met up with a white guy. From there, he led the way. I asked my dad to carry me because I was so tired. I slept in his arms. Three hours later, the sun was shining in my eyes. I woke up, and we

were finally here. We stayed in an old cabin. A few days later, my mom showed me a flyer...

### **There Is Freedom**

Brihannie Tavaréz

When there is no freedom  
people go crazy  
there is no control  
there is no hope  
there is war  
there is emotional trauma

When freedom comes to town  
there is joy  
there is celebration  
there is hope  
there are family reunions  
there is freedom

### **There Is Happiness**

Pablo Valle

When there is no freedom  
there is no joy  
Where there is no freedom  
there is torture  
there is cruelty

When freedom comes to town  
there is joy  
there is happiness  
families reunite

## **When Freedom Comes To Town**

Salvador Espailat

When freedom comes to town  
there is joy  
and there is happiness

When there is no freedom  
there is fighting  
and slaves are dying

When freedom comes to town  
there are no more whippings  
no more killing

When freedom comes to town  
the world is a better place



**Mr. Holthusen**

**Class 7C**





## Everything Is Going To Be Okay

Janelly Silva

I see a lot of people gathering around me, Mommy, and Daddy, and many other people I don't know. I listen to the other people calling out numbers, and out of my right ear I hear Mommy saying everything is going to be okay. I just want to go back home with Mommy and Daddy again. All of a sudden I feel a man grabbing me by my waist and pulling me towards him. Mommy gives me a last hug. I feel her tears dripping on my shoulders while she is saying, "Remember, everything is going to be okay." While the man was carrying me off the stage, I remember all the fun times me and Mommy and Daddy had, and that brought a tear to my eye. "I just wish I was back home with my mom and dad," I said to the man. Once I finished my sentence, everything was dark and I knew that was the last time I would ever see Mommy and Daddy.

## A Day I Would Remember

Christopher Young

As I woke up from a great dream yesterday night, I felt excitement as I thought to myself, *Today I am going to be the richest man in the world!* It was 5 in the morning. I was exhausted but I had to sell some slaves for some money. Once I made it to the

auction block, I saw lots of black slaves. Some were sad, mad, or happy to be off the slave ship once and for all. A few minutes later, I was checking each slave's back to see if it had caused much damage. "What's your name?" I said. "Ali," he replied softly. As I felt all the scars, bumps, and bruises on his back, I knew he wasn't great at working. "You must have been a bad boy, weren't you?" He didn't reply; he went straight to his family to say his last goodbye. "I'm not afraid of you," he yelled. *It's time to sell some slaves*, I say in my head. The excitement in the buyers catches me by surprise. The fear in the child slaves reminds me of the times I have abused them on the slave ship. This is definitely a date that I will remember. The first slave came up; it was a wife with a daughter. The wife hugged her child tightly as they took her away. This was a day I would remember by heart.

## **Leaving My Family**

Filip Savkovic

I see white men communicating, but I don't understand what they are talking about. I am very scared because I don't know what is going to happen. I smell poop on the floor; it smells horrible. I hope I will never come onto this dangerous path ever again. My daughter is squeezing me; it hurts a little bit, but I understand what is going through her right now. I see the auctioneer trying to pull me away from my daughter so he can sell me. The tear that is running down my face is so salty because I'm leaving my family to work for somebody I don't even know. I remember the good memories that I had with my family and friends when I was in Africa.

## **The Last Time**

Natania Sarita

I hear the white men screaming, and and I see tears rushing down my daughter's cheeks while she hugs me for the last time. I feel terrified to have my daughter be taken from me. I want freedom. I want my little girl to go to school and have a better life, and not be dragged into this mess. I'm afraid of losing my baby girl from a sickness. I remember my baby girl running in the fields and being happy. I dream about my little girl growing up and becoming a grandmother.

## **My Name Is Leea**

Kakiah Rolon

My name is Leea and I am a slave. I'm about to be sold on an auction block. I hear white people's voices bidding for me while I'm standing on the stage. I hear the sounds of other slaves crying because they are being taken away from their families. I can see all the white men staring at me while surrounding the stage, looking to see if I'm healthy. I see the tears in my mother's eyes. I feel my mother's tears dropping on my skin while we are both hugging each other tight, knowing that we are going to be separated. I feel mad and sad because slavery exists. I am now the property of a white man. I am crying and crying, knowing I'll never see my mama again.

## **There Should Be Justice**

Anthony Polanco

I see a white man standing on top of a pedestal, auctioning my daughter. I see colored people. The white men are bidding, screaming and talking loudly; it's making me terrified. The smell of white people and colored people's sweat is making me feel sick. I feel there should be justice. I feel like nothing. I want my daughter, and I want them to pay for what they have done. I want this because they are hurting and separating us. I hear people bidding on my daughter. I am angry and I feel like nothing because they're treating us like we're not even humans, even though we are just like them. I also feel this way because I want justice and equality. I just don't get it; why do they want my daughter? Why don't they take me instead? Please don't take my daughter. I see colored people crying and I see blood and it's making me lightheaded. The thought of getting taken away from family and home...

## **Never Coming Back**

Vlymarie Pena

The hurt of my daughter is making me cry and feel sad. My daughter's tears are pouring out like a river. I can't handle it anymore. The sounds of men screaming and shouting, afraid of leaving and never coming back... The memories of when I was happy and free were so exciting. All the beautiful moments, dreaming to be with my daughter and have rights, dreaming about freedom and peace for the world and for me. Slavery will one day end for good, and people will finally be happy.



## **Sold**

Jaiden Paulino

I can hear the auctioneer saying, “Sold,” the sensation of my mother’s tears dripping on me. I can feel my mother squeezing me tightly. The sound of the drunk white men screaming is frightening, but I don’t show it. I smell my mother for the very last time. The thought of being with my mother again is always there. I remember these things because this is who I am. My dreams are always about being with my mother. I also dream of being free.

## **Auctioneer**

Susie Marrero

The sight of money coming out of the buyers’ pockets is making me happy. The sight of poverty and slaves getting sold sickens me. I hear people crying and praying to their god. I hear the leather against the slaves, the smell of oil that’s used to moisturize the slaves’ skin. I am afraid of not making the sale, and our business failing. I want to sell all the slaves. I remember our old auction; we did so good. My dream is to succeed. I feel hopeful.

## **Money Is What I Need**

Valentina Kukaj

The sight of money coming out of the buyers’ hand is joyful. The smell of vomit and urine from the slaves makes me lose my focus. I hear slaves crying for each other and their family members. I tell the buyer to clean up his prize. I have the feeling that I’m going to be rich. I want to be rich and have a lot of money, because money is what I need. I want to remember how I made lots of money just for selling a slave. I dream about being a millionaire with lots of money.

## **Why Do You Want Me?**

Derwin Guzman

The sight of foreign white people fills my eyes and starts to make me nervous. The auctioneer yells out prices for me to be sold. The air is getting shorter and shorter from how nervous I’m feeling; it makes me think of what the future holds. I’m only hoping that

somehow I can run off, because of how unjust it is to be robbed of your family and freedom. I say out loud, "Why do you want me?" The auctioneer just looks straight into my eyes and looks away, saying nothing at all. I'm scared, so I think of good thoughts back when I was home. And dream of a better future.

## **I Want To Go Home**

Sherly Guerron

I'm standing on a wooden block. I'm staring down at a big group of white men. The cries of me and my mother are annoying the auctioneer. The smell of tobacco is making me lightheaded. The white men are speaking in a weird language and it's confusing me and my mother. It's filling me with fear. As I'm hugging my mother, it comforts me, but when she lets go, I go back to being terrified.. I want to go home where I was not chained up. I'm afraid the evil men are going to harm me and my mother.

## **Wanting Freedom**

Paola Fabian

The sight of the man whipping me is making me angry, but scared of what he'll do next. The smell of garbage surrounding me is making me nauseous. The man finally stops and walks away and locks all the doors. Feeling the air getting smaller and smaller and my heart pounding harder and harder. Wanting freedom and dreaming about the future, though it feels like it's getting father and farther to reach it, knowing that my daughter is gone. The absence of my daughter feels threatening, not knowing where she is or how she's feeling. I used to see everything in color, but each whip seems to have made me more blind in black and white. The world is closing up on me. I want to die, but then I'll lose and they'll win.

## **One Day**

Theo Espinal

I could hear my mom being called by the white men who were trying to sell me. My mom came with me as she tried to hide her sadness. I was put on stage in front of white men; their smell reached my nose as I made a disgusted face. I felt sad because I was going to be used to do animal work. I just wanted to be with my mom and dad, sitting in my home, having fun and laughing at my dad's jokes. The white man said, "*Going once...going twice...Sold!*" A white man reached out his hand to grab me. I hugged my mom tightly so I wouldn't leave her sight. Her tears fell to my shoulders and my face

touched her soft dress. I couldn't do anything. I felt like I was stuck in the middle of two tight walls that I couldn't fight. The white man dragged me to the cart and drove off as I saw my mom getting whipped. I dream that one day I will have a happy life.

## **A New Life**

Hazel Abreu

I see a life of injustice and cruel people. I don't know why they hate me and my daughter; we're all the same here. I am terrified by the cruel people yelling at me to let go of my baby, but it feels impossible. I am disgusted by the dried blood that is all over me. I also smell some old white man who's drunk and looking me up and down. I feel the pain of letting my baby go. I feel useless and I think I am about to give up. Why? Because it makes no sense fighting anymore when I know I am still going to be living this life. I lost the two most important people in my life. I just want freedom. I don't want to be getting tortured or raped every night. It's just not fair. I am afraid of dying. I have a dream where I am going to be free and start a new life.

## **On Our Way To Chicago**

Justin Zayas

*Washington:*

It was daytime and all the planters in the plantation were starting to plant. So I told my family that we would book it out of here at night. So in the middle of the night, I woke everybody up and then ran softly so no one would hear, and covered up our foot-tracks. We climbed over the fence; it smelled like metal. Then when everybody was over the fence, we ran away, feet moving, sweat running down my forehead. Then this white man shows up and helps us to go to Chicago. He tells us, "Get in the carriage and I will take you to Chicago." So we trusted him and got in the carriage and hurried on our way.

*Fielding:*

So in the daytime, my father was talking to my mom; all I could hear was gibberish from them two. So when it was bedtime, my dad woke me up from my bed. We ran across the plantation. I was the one who covered up our tracks. We climbed over the fence, then we ran away, breathing heavy, heart pounding, and sweat running. Then this mysterious man shows up and talks to my dad about something. All I heard was "Chicago"... Then we got in a cart and were on our way to Chicago.

## **We Just Ran**

Angel Vasquez

*Mr. Russell:*

The scream from my wife downstairs woke me out of my deep sleep and out of my bed. I threw on my robe and rushed downstairs. And then I noticed that two of my slaves and their three children were gone. I was speechless, confused, and surprisingly not as mad because their work was mediocre. But after I spent hundreds of dollars on those slaves, I wasn't going to let them go. Anger slowly began to take over my body. I was wondering how they got past the guard dogs and the rest of security that go roaming around in the night. I knew for sure I was not going to let those pigs win.

*Washington:*

The guards and dogs were slowly falling asleep, which was our cue to head out. I wanted to take my valuables, but my family ain't worth pieces of junk, or being whipped and torn alive. I waked my family, told them the plan, and warned them to be as quiet as possible. We quickly stopped for a drink of water, said our goodbyes to our dearest friends, and hopped right over the fence. As soon as we got on the other side of the fence, on the free side, we felt bullets drifting past our bodies, dogs barking, and the yells of guards. But we didn't stop for a thing in the world. We just ran and ran and ran.

## **We Are Never Safe**

Jennifer Ruiz

*Mary:*

I got so happy and emotional when I saw my kids. I was nervous because the day that me and my kids and husband are going to escape is finally here. When I went into the house I saw Matilda, and she looked much bigger and different. Her face, her, hair, and body had all changed. I started to tear up when we were hugging because I thought that I would never be able to see her again. Even though she seems so happy and bright, she still has a dark heart that hasn't been loved. It breaks my heart that she has to spend her childhood like that. That's why we are all here, united to escape. When we got everything set up and ready to put into action, we all went to the back door and followed Matilda. We were blessed because today the house-slave was in a good mood and when we asked him if we could head out the door to get something for our master, he said, "Sure, go ahead, take as much time as you need." When we got outside, we found a way to get out of the big gate. We found a big tree to hide in, so we crawled

there and found a safe place to stay. It was such a great feeling to be free. But all I could say was that in a big world like this, we are never safe.

*Matilda:*

My daddy, momma, and my little brother decided to make our move to escape. It was very early in the morning and my master was very sick, and he decided to put me and my family together since there were going to be so many chores to do. I hadn't seen my brother and parents in two years; the last memory that I have of them is when we were in the slave auction and white men wanted to buy us. That was the day that my worst nightmare became real. (I thought, *I'll never see sunshine again.*) When I saw Momma, I was so happy that tears were falling all over my cheeks. I hugged her for such a long time that I automatically felt safe. Daddy was there with my brother, holding him, and he was as happy as I was to see him. We all gathered up in the kitchen and made a plan. The plan was that we head to the back door (where people barely go). Daddy would then tell the house slave who's at the door that we are all just going to pick something up. When they let us out for just a bit, we crawled on the floor and hid in the closest big tree without another house slave seeing us. We got the feeling that we'd escaped, then we found a way to get out of the gates. When I saw the sunlight, I felt a relief that the nightmare was over.

## **Determination**

Ranphy Reyes

I was in the house watering the plants and I overheard Mr. Russell and another white man talking about trading my son and daughter for a thousand dollars. I didn't know how much money that was, I just knew they were going away, so right there I planned to escape. I planned it with Mary, my wife, so that tomorrow night it would take full effect. So I spoke about it with my wife and kids, and I knew a nice white man named Tom who lived in Chicago; he was against slavery. So we went out at two in the morning. We left the fields and went back around the trees and across the river. We had to sneak ourselves in a boat, so we went off. We were hungry, sick, and dizzy. We finally got there. It was hard to sneak out of the boat, but we pulled it off. We were hungry and sick but our determination pulled us through. He told us to meet him in the back of the church. We knew what he said because my wife learned English and translated it for us. We knew where it was because it was really tall, so we went and opened the door. The smell of candles splashed my face, and there we saw him...

## The Only Thing On My Mind

Juart Reyes

It was a hot day and I had to wake up early in the morning. I walked to the auction and took the slaves out. It was morning and I was standing on the stage, and before me were two disgusting pieces of chattel. The only thing on my mind was who shouted the highest bid so far. I just wanted to get the money and get rid of them. I was so tired because I was standing out here for nearly two whole hours. I *need* to get these sold! I hope I do. I wish I was rich 'cause of these slaves. I am so tired of hearing their shouts. When I was walking home, I asked myself, *why do I want to get rid of these slaves?* Well, because they are supposed to help me, but bother me like flies that never go away. We also need to “teach” them how to behave properly. That’s why we want to keep them, and if we’re tired of “teaching” them, then we sell them to “benefit” them, so they can learn more from others. *The money we earn is what it costs us to teach you.*

## They Trust Me

Matthew Molina Restrepo

*The Bounty Hunter:*

I walked down the hard concrete path I take every day. I began to question myself. *How will I get money? How can I support my family?* Ever since the Boston Port Act, I can’t work as a trader, I can’t go anywhere, I can’t make any money. Just when all my luck seems gone, a paper blows into my face, blocking the light from my eyes. I pull it away and read, “*FIVE RUNAWAY SLAVES...REWARD \$150 IF WITHIN 100 MILES OF ST. LOUIS...\$200 IF FOUND FURTHER..*” I realize this is my only chance to earn some money for my family. Two days later I walk in a dark alley, I hear a faint breath from someone, but it’s not me. I walk further until I can see nothing. Blinded by darkness, I’m hearing things I can’t see. I stumble and my chin bangs against the floor. I struggle to get up, then I see five negro slaves curled up together. My conscience strikes... I could sell these slaves out, or I could be a better person and help them. I decide to help them. I speak to them, saying that everything will be okay, and they believe me. Each day I give them food and water. Although on the eleventh day I travel to a man’s house. It’s very large with farms and quarters everywhere. I talk to the slaveowner, saying, “I have your slaves...just follow me.” After a long travel back, I tell the slaves to come out. They walk as if they trust me; the owner quickly grabs them and puts them in a carriage, tied-up. The owner looks at me with a stern face as he rewards me with \$150. Now I can survive with my family for a bit longer.

*William Russell:*

My name is William Russell. I walk around my land, watching my slaves, until I realize five of my slaves are missing. I search every quarter. I decide to make a paper saying, "FIVE RUNAWAY SLAVES...REWARD \$150 IF WITHIN 100 MILES OF ST. LOUIS... \$200 IF FOUND FURTHER.." Seven days later, a man comes to my home saying he found my slaves. I follow him, thinking, *He has been through a lot. He has told many lies.* I see an alleyway with my five slaves walking out. But I faintly hear, "Mitch, how could you do this? We trusted you." I give "Mitch" a stern look, but I reward him with \$150. I travel home with my slaves and wonder, *What did he do?* But I never find the answer.

## **Going To That Good Place**

Daysi Martinez

*Owner:*

As soon as I noticed they were gone, I knew they were heading to Chicago. Ever since I bought Mary and Washington, Mary ain't ever shut up about her old owner. She ain't ever stopped talkin' 'bout goin' back. The only reason she's still alive is because she's a good breeder. But it's Washington who I want back. He was a darn good field slave. The rest of his family were just a bunch of domestic slaves. An' I got enough of those. But either way, I want them back!

*Matilda:*

It was dark in the room filled with slaves when Mommy tapped me on the shoulder and shook me gently until I woke up. She told me to be quiet, so I did. Next to her was my oldest brother, and my other brother in Daddy's arms. We walked downstairs, tryin' not to make noise. When we got outside the house, there were still a few slaves in the field. Mommy jumped the fence and Daddy passed the three of us over to her. Then it was his turn. We ran outta there without making a sound. Daddy put me on his shoulders and I fell asleep. That's all I remember, and Mommy saying we're going to that "good place."

## **The Last To Get Out**

Alex Martinez

*Matilda:*

One night my mother woke me and told me it was time to go. I was six so I didn't know exactly where we were going; I only knew we were about to leave the owner's house. My family and I went through the window, and when we got outside we ran as fast as we could to get away. Later that day, we ran into a white man. I was scared that we were gonna be slaves again. Instead, the white man helped us to escape. After that, we decided to rest next to a tree, and my dad protected us. We could barely walk from running on the hard rocks through the field; that is why we rested for along time.

*Malcolm:*

It was the night that we were gonna escape from the slave owner's house. I was scared but excited as well. Me, my dad, and Fielding let my mom go through the window first and passed me and Matilda to my mom. My dad was the last to get out. We ran but my dad carried me, and my mom carried Matilda until we got to a fence. My dad helped us climb over. When we got out, we went to the nearest tree and rested. The next day, a white man came and told us he wanted to help us. I didn't believe him, but we were able to escape with his help.

## **A Great Life**

Brian Lantigua

*Matilda:*

It started when the Master's wife died. She was going down the stairs, and everybody left to see what happened and left us slaves alone. Me and my family left to escape. I went with them, and I was really scared, because I never did this before and if we get caught again, I'm going to cry, and be with my mommy. And I'm going to get a BoBo with strings. A man has to hide us. My dad said, We are going to Chicago to have a better life and a lot of education when we grow up.

*Dad:*

After fifteen years I have escaped. And my family is going to have a great life, and not get whipped by the Master. And we're gonna be in a good, very peaceful place. We're going to Chicago, and my children are going to have an education to help me and my wife. I've had enough of being a slave. Now we're going to Chicago. We met a mysterious white man who let me and my family sleep at his own house. I was thinking



he was gonna slave us, but we didn't think he was going to because he was alone, so we went on and he welcomed us inside his house. He gave us food, he gave us a little bedroom with a bed, a little table with a chair, and a window. We all fell asleep. When we woke up, the mysterious white man Frederick gave me a plate of food. I asked him if there was more. He said back, "No." And my kids were just staring at me. In their eyes, it looked like they had hunger. And me and my wife took half of the food and gave it to our children. I was deciding to go to another place and not live here because I really didn't feel safe in Frederick's, so we moved on.

## **As a Family**

Steven Howard

### *The Mother:*

We escaped together, as a family. We couldn't bear being away from each other. I would crack without my Washington and my babies. We love each other and I don't care that there is a higher chance of getting caught if we stay together (though my Washington does care).

### *The Slave Owner:*

Them darn slaves were able to escape from me right under my damn nose. You see, for fifteen years, my nineteen-year-old son would watch over them quarters to make sure there was no funny business, but recently he got the measles, and when he was sick in bed, they took advantage and ran away. Now I have a bounty on their heads. The whole state of Missouri is after them, because everyone around here knows how well off I am.

## **Fear**

Joshua Bruce

"The name's Russell." He'd put his coffee on the table. "I have five missing negro slaves on the loose," Russell told the man. "I am willing to pay you a good amount of cash for them slaves." The man grunted, but shook his hand and walked off with his handgun strapped to his waist. "Oh, one more thing," Russell interrupted, "I want them back alive, but if you have to kill them, I won't pay you at all." The man slammed the door behind him, leaving all but dust. Russell just kicked back his feet on his chair and just sat there, wondering where his slaves were.

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"Come on, we have to go now. I can hear them!" Washington whispered in fear. As Washington dashed through the forest, he heard branches crack and twigs snapping, and felt the fear of being seen. "Alright, let's breathe for a minute..." Washington was breathing loudly; he could hear the leaves rustle in the wind; other than that, complete silence. "Alright, we should probably get going. We don't want to get caught by the white people." He took a breath and dashed off into the forest.

## **Until the Sun Sets**

Daisy Cortes

*Mary:*

I'm very nervous because today is the day me and my family escape. I have been living here for fifteen years, being abused, and I can't take it anymore. Neither can my family. My children have been whipped too. But then we met a white man who told us he could help us escape tonight. The man wanted to help us; he was very nice. We are going to travel to Chicago to live there from now on. I'm very anxious to leave. My husband Washington packs everyone's things very quietly. We planned to escape at sunset time. Now all we do is wait till the white man arrives. Also until the sun sets. Sunset arrives and we go with the white man to the wagon and leave.

*Matilda:*

I see my mom and dad start to pack. I'm very confused. I don't know what's happening. I ask Mommy and she says, "We're going to leave this awful place tonight." I'm very happy because I hate this place so much. I also see my siblings with worried looks on their faces. The sun starts to set, we see the white man, and he helps us escape from the house. We run so fast to the covered wagon. The white man helps us on and we start to leave. The next morning we're still on our way to Chicago and I start to see "wanted" posters: *Reward \$200 if found*. I look closer and it shows me and my family's faces on it. I tell my mom and she starts to panic.

My dad Washington says, "I knew this was a bad idea. They probably found out we were going to Chicago." I start to cry. "I don't want to go back to that horrible place!" My siblings start to scream and cry. "It's going to be okay," my mother says. We then take a break and fall asleep in the covered wagon. I soon wake up to my mom and dad screaming. My mom yells, "Let go of my daughter!" I see our owner, and the white man has vanished. This was all a setup so the white man could get the money. Our owner doesn't let us go; he takes us all the way back to the slave house. He punishes all of us. He takes us one by one to see each other get whipped, and we can't do anything about it. It hurts us to see each other crying and in pain, and there's nothing we can do. We saw the white man with an evil grin on his face. I want to hurt him. So he could feel the way we feel every single day...