

Name:

Date:

Class/Period:

Voices: African Americans in the Texas Revolution: The Story of Emily West

Instructions: Analyze the primary source and other documents by answering the questions using supporting evidence.

Background Essay

By 1824, Texas was firmly tied to the institution of slavery; however, there was a very small portion of free African Americans living and working in Texas. This is the story of one such person, Emily West. Emily lived in the northeastern United States, where she lived as a free African American in Connecticut and New York. Slavery had been abolished in both states by the 1830s. Sometime in the summer of 1835, Emily meets up with James Morgan while in New York, where Morgan was buying equipment and supplies to bring back to Texas. Morgan approached Emily to come back to Texas as a contract laborer (labor based on a free-will but is legally enforceable under a contract for a set period of time.)

Morgan signed five additional contracts with free African Americans that included a young man named Webster Augustus, who was an apprentice in New Haven CT, and a free African American named Prince Cooper, who would work as a "household servant" for Morgan until July 1840 when he reached 21 years of age and his contract would end. Morgan included an additional 12 other workers, some were white, and others were free African Americans. They all set sail on Morgan's schooners, the Flash and Kosciusko from New York in early November and arrived at Galveston Bay in late December 1835. The intent for most was to construct buildings in New Washington. "New Washington was at the point where Buffalo Bayou entered San Jacinto Bay, at the northwestern extremity of Galveston Bay in eastern Harris County. In the 1830s, the town was laid out on a bluff by James Morgan, acting as an agent for the New Washington Association, a group of New York financiers. In April 1836, a few days before the battle of San Jacinto, Antonio López de Santa Anna almost captured David G. Burnet and the interim government at New Washington."

Document A, Contracted Labor Agreement

This Agreement, made & entered into by and between Emily West of New Haven, Conn of the one part & James Morgan of Texas on the other part. Witnesseth that the said West hereby binds herself that she will go out in said Morgan’s Vessel to Texas and there work for said Morgan at any kind of house work she, said West is qualified to do and to industriously pursue the same from the time she commences until the end of twelve months and not quit or leave said Morgan’s employ after she commences work for him, at any time whatever, without said Morgan’s consent, until the end of twelve months aforesaid said Morgan hereby binding himself to take said West out to Texas on board said Morgan’s vessel, free of expense, and to set said West to work within one week after she gets there if not sooner, said Morgan agreeing to pay said West at the rate of one hundred dollars pr. year, said wages to be paid every three months if requested.

In witness whereof the parties have hereunto set their hands & seal in New York this 28th day of October 1835.

In presence of: J Morgan, Frederick Platt, Emily D West, Simeon S. Jocelyn

Emily West and James Morgan. “Contracted Labor Agreement.” *William A. Philpot, Jr. Collection*. Special Collections. Arlington, Texas: The University of Texas at Arlington Library, October 28, 1835. (AR507-2-3)

Analysis Questions:

1. When the contract states “This agreement, made & entered into” do you think Emily did this freely? Why? Cite text evidence to support your thinking.

2. What would Emily West be doing for Morgan while in Texas? Please cite text evidence to support your thinking.

3. How long is the contract and how much will Emily be paid? Why do you think Emily made the decision to accept this contract? Please cite text evidence to support your thinking

Document B, *What happened to Emily West*

The events of the Texas Revolution in 1836 disrupted everything. "Emily D. West remained in Texas until early 1837 when she asked for and received a passport allowing her to return home. Isaac Moreland wrote a note to the secretary of state saying that he had met Emily in April 1836, that she was a thirty-six-year-old free woman who had lost her "free" papers at the battleground. She stated that she came from New York in September 1835 with Colonel Morgan and was anxious to return home." It is believed that "Mrs. Lorenzo de Zavala, by then a widow, was planning to return to New York on board Morgan's schooner in March, and it seems possible that Morgan arranged passage aboard for Emily."

"West, Emily D. (Unknown–Unknown)." TSHA, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/west-emily-d.

Analysis Questions:

1. Why would Emily need "free" papers?

2. Emily was "anxious to get home," what fear do you think Emily might have if she remained in Texas?