



AUTHOR'S NOTES ON Flyin' West

Pearl Cleage

The Homestead Act of 1860 offered 320 acres of "free" land stolen from the dwindling populations of Native Americans, to U.S. citizens who were willing to settle in western states. Although many settlers lived in traditional family groups, by 1890, a quarter of a million unmarried or widowed women were running their own farms and ranches. The farm work was hard and constant, but many of these women were able to survive due to their own physical stamina, determination and the help of their neighbors.

Large groups of African American homesteaders left the South following the Civil War to settle in all-black towns. The so-called "Exodus of 1879" saw twenty to forty thousand African American men, women and children — "Exodusters" — reach Kansas under the guidance of a charismatic leader, Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, who escaped from slavery and claimed later, "I am the whole cause of the Kansas migration!"

Crusading black journalist Ida B. Wells' call to her readers to leave Memphis, Tennessee, after an 1892 lynching and riot, was heeded by over 7,000 black residents of the city who packed up as many of their belongings as they could carry and headed west in search of a life free from racial violence.

Unfortunately, their dreams were shattered as many western states enacted Jim Crow laws as cruel as any in the old Confederacy and effectively destroyed most black settlements by the early 1900's.

This is the story of some of the black people who went West.



The Cast

in order of appearance

Sophie WashingtonTrazana Beverley
 Miss LeahOlivia Cole
 Fannie DoveDenise Burse-Mickelbury
 Wil ParrishHerman LeVern Jones
 Minnie Dove CharlesErika L. Heard
 Frank CharlesCount Stovall

THE SETTING

Beginning in the fall of 1898;
 outside the all-black town of Nicodemus, Kansas.



There will be one fifteen minute intermission.

Crossroads Theatre Company operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional stage actors and stage managers in the United States and The Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers..

The Crossroads Theatre Company is a participant in the National Theatre Artist Residency Program, administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for American theatre, and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.