

Let's look at some of the facts she leaves out about Nicodemus, Kansas to make her point. Unlike the Nicodemus in her story, by the 1890's white people and black people did live together in this real town. In fact, the economic survival of Nicodemus depended on the peaceful integration of the white and black community. In general white families who moved to Nicodemus were, financially better off and better prepared for their first winters in a new town with more supplies and food than were black families who, in general, had saved just enough money to buy their land. There were affluent black families who did much of the political rallying to incorporate the town of Nicodemus, and who helped in the educating of black people who needed to learn how to read and write, but they represented less than 40% of the thousands who moved to Nicodemus to find a new life.

One other minor fact that Cleage reinterprets in her story is how the town of Nicodemus was founded. While Sophie credits Benjamin "Pap" Singleton for providing the inspiration for many families to migrate to Kansas, there were seven men who made the first trek to the uncharted territory. Out of the seven founders, there were six black men, and one white. Although his life was eventually threatened out of anger that he may have stolen a substantial amount of money, many of the townspeople—black and white, realized he had been set-up, forgave him and welcomed him back to the community.

Regardless of how Nicodemus, Kansas began, the impact of its origin is still remembered today in history and now in theatre. Please enjoy Flyin' West and ask yourself these questions as you attend the performance: What do the characters say about their own life experience? Can I hear author speaking through them?