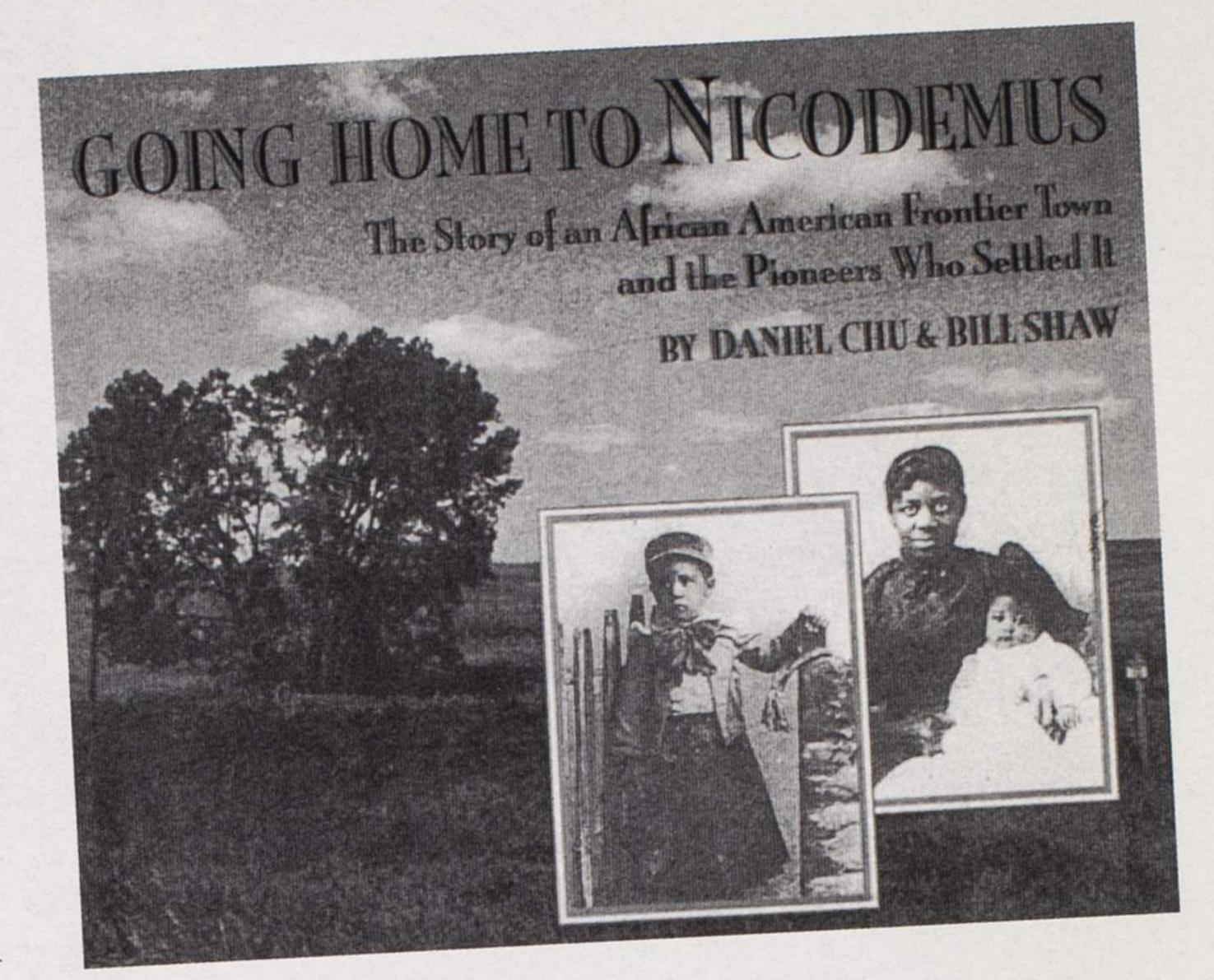
Going Home to Nicodemus

By Daniel Chu and Bill Shaw

Spotlighting an overlooked chapter in American history, *Going Home to Nicodemus* tells the true story of an all-black town founded in Kansas more than a century ago by former slaves. In the aftermath of the Civil War, many



freed slaves found themselves without homes or a way to make a living. One group of hearty souls, hearing of free land in Kansas, set out from Kentucky for the unknown. Their stuggles to found a town in the barren plains of the American West is a gripping narrative of determination, perseverance—and success. For today, Nicodemus, Kansas is the oldest all-black town west of the Mississippi, and each year the ties that bind the townspeople are renewed and the bravery of the first settlers remembered. Interspersed with quotes from past and present residents, this is the moving story of people who refused to give up!

Daniel Chu is a former writer for *People* magazine. He also writes nonfiction for young readers. Among his books are *A Glorious Age in Africa, Passage to the Golden Gate,* and *China.* He lives in New York City.

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they did, Nicodemus has survived as the oldest-and now the only remaining-all-black frontier town on the Great Plains. When we got in sight of Nicodemus, the men shouted, "There is The holes in the ground that greeted Willianna Hickman are long gone now, but Nicodemus."Being very sick, I hailed this news with gladness. I looked with Nicodemus is still there. all the eyes I had. "Where is Nicodemus? I don't see it." My husband pointed out various smokes coming out of the ground and said, "That is Nicodemus." The families [there] lived in dugouts. . . The scenery was not at all invining, and I began to cry. - Topeka [Kansas] Daily Capital, 1937 To read the history books, you'd think only white people went West after the Civil War. But blacks also came out here and played an important role in the settling of the frontier. Nicodemus is an overlooked chapter in American history, and the beauty of it is, it still lives. -Angela Bates, President of the Nicodemus Historical Society, in a 1991 interview cumstances so lacking in comforts, stunned even those who had experienced the cruelties of slavery. The new hardships they faced were many, more than enough to discourage all but the bravest and strongest. Most of the pioneers from Kentucky stayed. They coped and endured. They held to their hopes and dreams and kept their faith. And because they and their children did what Mr. and Mrs. George Sayer and their children, Raymond, Calvin, Andrew and Ethel.

Reading Level: Grade 5 +
Interest Level: Age 10 +
Black-and-White Photograhs
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