A Little More Freedom

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PART TWO

Black Striving in White Worlds, 1860–1910

African American migrants from the South to the Lower Midwest immediately set to work to create institutions that would bind them together with other African Americans both within and beyond the places in which they settled. Through the private and semipublic instruments of family, church, and voluntary society they cultivated one side of their double identity. At the same time, they sought to realize another kind of hope in northern freedom by striving to become equal participants in a more public setting, the economy and politics of their adopted communities. Their goals, and the means they employed to pursue them, probably differed in no significant way from those of the majority of their European American fellow citizens. But their efforts to realize these aspirations in the context of the midwestern small town sometimes proved disruptive to precarious balances.