

enslaved persons – and demanded retribution from the very federal government they had succeeded from. What did both sides want? Land.

Immediately following an all-consuming war, the federal government was faced with the dilemma of whether to split up the confiscated Confederate lands and distribute them to the eager freedmen or to compensate the Southern landowners who the North fought so dearly to keep within the Union. In Savannah, Georgia, at the end of Sherman's March, the Union General and 20 prominent Southern African American religious leaders gathered to discuss what the freedmen wanted and needed. "The way to best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn it and till it by our own labor... and we can soon maintain ourselves and

have something to spare... We want to be placed on land until we are able to buy it and make it our own," said the Baptist minister, Garrison Frazier in response to General Sherman's inquire.

This meeting of local Southern African American leaders with the triumphant General of the Union culminated in Special Field Order Number 15. Issued by Sherman on January 16, 1865, it commanded that the former slaves take up the land abandoned and confiscated from Confederate soldiers. This became the failed promise to provide every freed family with a plot of land to farm and a mule to do the work. Unfortunately, while some freedmen were initially given land on the sea islands of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, President Lincoln's



(Left) "Spring Plowing in Cut-Over Region South of Marshall, Texas, April 1939." (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Digital Collections) **(Above)** "Ben Turner and Family in Their Wagon with Mule Team. Flint River Farms, Georgia. May 1939." (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Digital Collections) **(Below)** "Daughter of Cube Walker, Negro TP Client Belzoni, Mississippi. Delta, Bringing Home Cow from the Fields in the Evening, Nov. 1939." (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Digital Collections)

