



The Flying Africans

An African American Story from the Southern USA

Did you know that the people could fly? They say that, long ago in Africa, some of the people knew magic and could fly like birds in the sky. They had sun-kissed brown skin and black-brown wings with feathers that you could carry them anywhere they wanted to go.

One day, some men with pale skin came to Africa from far away. They came in huge ships to capture the Africans and take them far from their homes. And that is what they did. They caught the African people, those who could fly and those who couldn't. They chained their arms and legs together so that they couldn't escape, and they put them on to their ships. The ones that could fly had to shed their wings because the ship holds were so hot and crowded.



The journey across the ocean was long and hard, and when they finally reached the land, the African people were sold into slavery. They were made to work in fields growing crops for the men with pale skin. They worked in the blazing sun and in the freezing cold. They worked from early in the morning until late at night. The cruel bosses only gave them scraps to eat, and they slept in shacks. It was nothing like their precious homes in Africa, and the enslaved Africans were overcome with despair. In their misery and sadness, even those that once could fly couldn't use their powers to fly away.

Over time, most people even forgot that they COULD fly. But there were a few who kept to the old ways. These elders - the grandparents in the community - would sing songs in the language of their homeland to help them remember. They sang, and waited for the right moment.

And one day, the right moment arrived. The sun burned down on them so much that the crops seemed to shimmy and shake with the heat waves rising off of the ground. The Africans were exhausted from work, yet the bosses demanded more. The babies were crying from hunger and thirst, yet there was no water or shelter for them. On a day just like that, the elders began to sing – quietly at first, and then louder so that their voices rose over the field. The words of their song were magic, and those that once could fly looked up from their work towards the sky. Their eyes shone as they suddenly remembered the feeling of flying through the air. And at that moment, their feet left the ground.

One by one, the people rose up into the sky – dark brown bodies against the bright blue sky. Higher and higher they soared up into the clouds so that the bosses couldn't reach them. And away they flew! Some say that they flew off of the plantation to safer land. Others say that they flew across the ocean, all the way back home to Africa. But everyone agrees that once they flew away, they were free again.

