

Excerpts. [Speech], "To the Freed People of Orangeburg District," enclosed in Charles C. Soule to O. O. Howard, 12 June 1865, National Archives Microfilm, M 752, r 17, 0053_61.

You have heard many stories about your condition as freemen. You do not know what to believe: you are talking too much; waiting too much; asking for too much....Listen, then, and try to understand just how you are situated....You may have a harder time this year than you have ever had before; it will be the price you pay for your freedom. You will have to work hard, and get very little to eat, and very few clothes to wear....Do not expect to save up anything or to have much corn or provisions ahead at the end of the year....You do not own a cents worth except yourselves. The plantation you live on is not yours, not the houses, nor the cattle, mules and horses; the seed you planted with was not yours, and the ploughs and hoes do not belong to you....[F]ree people everywhere else work Saturday, and you have no more right to the day than they have....Every man must work under orders ... and on a plantation the head man who gives all the orders is the owner of the place. Whatever he tells you to do you must do at once, and cheerfully....Some people must be rich, to pay the others, and they have the right to do no work except to look out after their property.... Remember that all your working time belongs to the man who hires you....[W]hen a husband and wife live on different places.... this year, they have their crops planted on their own places and they must stay to work them. At the end of the year they can live together. Until then they must see each other only once in a while. . . . Remember that even if you are badly off, no one can buy or sell you.