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Land and Labor, 1865 examines the transition from slavery to free labor during the tumultuous first months after the Civil War. Letters and testimony by the participants--former slaves, former slaveholders, Freedmen's Bureau agents, and others--reveal the connection between developments in workplaces across the South and an intensifying political contest over the meaning of freedom and the terms of national reunification. Essays by the editors place the documents in interpretive context and illuminate the major themes.

In the tense and often violent aftermath of emancipation, former slaves seeking to ground their liberty in economic independence came into conflict with former owners determined to keep them dependent and subordinate. Overseeing that conflict were northern officials with their own notions of freedom, labor, and social order. This volume of *Freedom* depicts the dramatic events that ensued--the eradication of bondage and the contest over restoring land to ex-Confederates; the introduction of labor contracts and the day-to-day struggles that engulfed the region's plantations, farms, and other workplaces; the achievements of those freedpeople who attained a measure of independence; and rumors of a year-end insurrection in which ex-slaves would seize the land they had been denied and exact revenge for past oppression.

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