ABSTRACT: Renewed attention brought by the Movement for Black Lives to a demand for reparations for Black people in this country invites us to turn our attention to the historical context from which that demand originates. This lecture takes up that invitation, offering a detailed account of the circumstances that surrounded the emancipation of enslaved people in two unique contexts, the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Davis Bend, Jefferson Davis’ former plantation outside Vicksburg, Mississippi. I focus on the conditions of emancipation, rather than that of enslavement, to argue that being freed without gaining reparations for enslavement delivers a kind of incomplete justice.