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The Emancipation Proclamation: A Key Factor in the Civil War

The Emancipation Proclamation was a key event in America's Civil War, and had a major impact on America's history. Slavery was a root cause of the Civil War. Though it was very horrific, good things came out of it.. At the beginning of the war, President Lincoln was not worried about the slavery issue, but keeping the nation together. After the Emancipation Proclamation was written and signed, the war was more focused on abolishing slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation changed the focus of the Civil War and had historical significance because it led to the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment, which banned slavery from the United States of America.

There were many issues that led to the Civil War. "Conflicts escalated between law makers, abolitionists, and Southern Slave holders. As a result, the United States entered a Civil War. The introduction to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 led to a new area of freedom." (*Freedom of Slavery*, p. 5) Both sides of the Union had different views on slavery. The North was against slavery. The South continued using slaves because it was helping the economy grow more rapidly. By not having to pay someone to work on the plantations, they made more money. The South was rebelling because they wanted to keep their slaves. They also felt as though the government was trying take away their slaves. The Civil War of the United States actually had some good results, come out of it, though it was brutal.

Lincoln tried other solutions and other ways to stop the war, but they did not work. The great solution to Lincoln's dilemma was the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln wrote the

Emancipation Proclamation because he ran out of options to stop the war. He was left with one clear solution: free the slaves in rebelling states. Lincoln wanted to have practical results from freeing the slaves. (Lincoln's Proposition of Gradual Emancipation in *Meaning and Making of the Emancipation Proclamation*, p.32) The Emancipation Proclamation was such a big deal, the government and military would hold out this order. The Emancipation Proclamation led to new freedom for slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation was the start to great things.

Lincoln started freeing the slaves even before the Emancipation Proclamation was signed. In the District of Columbia Emancipation Act it says, "The Union must be preserved and hence all indispensable means must be employed." (District of Columbia Emancipation Act in *Meaning and Making of the Emancipation Proclamation*, p. 34) In April 1862, he made it so all the slaves in Washington D. C. were free. When the slaves were freed in Washington D.C. each slave owner was offered \$300 for each slave released. This was a special offer because only the slave owners in the District of Columbia got the money offer. (District of Columbia Emancipation Act in *Meaning and Making of the Emancipation Proclamation*, p.34) Another important date, is June 19, 1862. All the slaves in territories were freed. (Law Enacting Emancipation in the Federal Territories in *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, p. 432) There started to be a common pattern with freeing slaves. In August 1862 This meant that if they were under the U.S. government all slaves would be freed. Lincoln asked a group of black men to come to the White House, which was the first time something like this had happened. Lincoln talked to them about the issue of slavery and tried to think of ways he could help them. His idea was to send them to the Caribbean Islands, but they felt insulted and angry. (*Abraham Lincoln: Photographic Story of a Life*, p. 74).

Some slaves were freed before the Emancipation Proclamation was written. The slaves would not have to be slaves ever again, but if the South had won the war, slavery would continue. A Southern slave owner had his slaves confiscated because he supported the Confederacy. In the Certificate of Freedom, written by the U.S. Military the document that freed Wally Caruz and his family states, "...[they] are forever emancipated..." The U.S. Military was able to free this family of slaves because the government ushered a Second Confiscation and

Militia Act. (Second Confiscation and Militia Act in *Making and Meaning of the Emancipation Proclamation*, p.42).

When Lincoln presented the draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet, they wanted to wait to announce it to the public until the Union had a victory. (*Abraham Lincoln: A Photographic Life*, p.76) On January 1, 1863 Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. (Emancipation Proclamation, p.1) When the Emancipation Proclamation was announced, all the slaves in rebelling states were freed. This did not end the war though. The South, with the threat of having their slaves taken away, refused to end the war; and the war still raged on for two more years.

Only in times of war could the government take away property of the rebelling people. This is why Lincoln could free the slaves during the Civil War because they were dubbed as “property.” When the Emancipation Proclamation was passed, 3.5 million slaves were going to be free. (*Freedom from Slavery*, p.6) So for them, they did not have to be slaves any more. This is why Lincoln pushed to get the Thirteenth Amendment passed. Then slavery would be abolished and gone forever.

Many people had different feelings about the Emancipation Proclamation. In a letter to the president a black woman, Hannah Johnson tells Lincoln how she felt about the Emancipation Proclamation. It reads: "When you are dead and in Heaven, in a thousand years that action of yours will make the Angels sing your praises." (Letter from Hannah Johnson to President Abraham Lincoln in *Meaning and Making of the Emancipation Proclamation*, p. 34)

Another black woman, Annie Davis, an enslaved woman in Maryland wrote a short message to Abraham Lincoln asking if she could be free. Since, she was in a state that belonged to the Union, the answer would have been “no.” She writes,

It is my Desire to be free. to go to see my people on the eastern shore. my mistress wont let me you will please let me know if we are free. and what I can do. I write to you for advice. please send me word this[?] week. or as soon as possible. and oblidge [sic]. (Letter from Annie Davis to Abraham Lincoln in *Meaning and Making of the Emancipation Proclamation*, p.54)

I can understand why this woman would feel this way but there are so many things that the Emancipation Proclamation did bring to pass. If you think deeper, none of the slaves would be free, if it were not for the war. The Emancipation Proclamation opened the doors for so much more. It led to having an amendment to the Constitution passed, and it also allowed the blacks to not have to work on the Southern Plantations without proper treatment.

Black men wanted to join the army in both the South and North. Until the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, they could not fight, nor help. As a result of the Emancipation Proclamation, in the Union army there were almost 200,000 African American soldiers. (*American Documents: The Emancipation Proclamation*, p. 21) The African American soldiers really benefited the North because they had 200,000 more men to help them. Had they not contributed to the fight, The North might have not won the Civil War.

Since the Emancipation Proclamation was basically a letter from the president, it involved only one person writing and signing it. This significant document did not actually, physically free the slaves. Instead it gave the slaves a chance to run away to the North. This changed the focus of the war. (*The Emancipation Proclamation: An Act of Justice*, p.4) Lincoln was pushing for an amendment to be passed about abolishing slavery because the Emancipation Proclamation was only in effect until the war ended. The Thirteenth Amendment which was passed on January 31, 1865, says “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a

punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” (Amendment XIII, p.1) The passing of an amendment to the Constitution is a really big deal. The thirteenth amendment finished what the Emancipation Proclamation started.

There has been a slow but steady path of freeing the slaves before the Emancipation Proclamation was announced. Lincoln kept having an urge that he needed to do something about slavery, so he finally wrote the Emancipation Proclamation. The Emancipation Proclamation was written to free the slaves in rebelling states and it led to the Thirteenth Amendment being passed, which banned slavery from the United States. There were some good outcomes from the Civil War. The Emancipation Proclamation opened a door of how we are living today and set off a spiral of effects including the thirteenth amendment, and a new era of equality, from the time it was written until now.

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