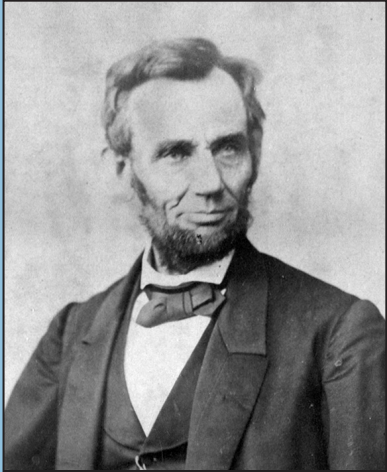


Abraham Lincoln and the EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION



*with an introduction by
Allen C. Guelzo*

That on the first day of January in the year of
our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-
three, all persons held as slaves within any
state, or designated part of a state, the people
whereof shall then be in rebellion against the
United States shall be then, thenceforward,
and forever free; and the executive govern-
ment of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will, ~~during the con-~~
~~tinuance in office of the present incumbent,~~ re-
cognize, such persons, ~~as being free,~~ and will
do no act or acts to oppress such persons, or any
of them, in any efforts they may make for their
actual freedom.

Abraham Lincoln
and the
EMANCIPATION
PROCLAMATION



A Selection of Documents for Teachers

with an introduction by
Allen C. Guelzo



compiled by
James G. Basker
and
Justine Ahlstrom

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Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation

In the summer of 1862, the United States had been an independent republic for eighty-six years, and for every one of those years, the practice of slavery had been legal in half the country. It was an odd juxtaposition—not because slavery was unusual, since the practice of holding some human beings in forced labor for the benefit of others was as old as human society—but because the American republic had been founded as a dramatic break with all past human societies, celebrating liberty and equality for all, without kings or princes or dictators. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,” read the Declaration of Independence in 1776, “that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Yet, the author of those words, Thomas Jefferson, owned slaves; so did the first president of the United States, George Washington. And even though Jefferson, Washington, and other founders of the republic understood clearly that dedicating their new nation to liberty sat strangely beside the use of a labor force deprived of all liberty, only a handful actually renounced slavery and freed their slaves. The infant republic needed forced labor to till and harvest its crops; and when one of those crops, cotton, became the world’s best-selling commodity, the need for slave labor soon turned from being a regrettable necessity to what slaveowners defended as a “positive good.” Besides, they argued, the people whom the laws allowed slaveowners to hold in bondage were Africans and the descendents of Africans—people of a different race and color—whom white Americans convinced themselves were good only for enslavement anyway.

Yet, the hideous contradiction between the ideals of liberty and the practice of slavery drove many Americans in the other direction. By 1861, eighteen of the northernmost states of the American Union (plus California and Oregon on the Pacific coast) had banned slavery, and within those states, calls for the complete abolition of slavery everywhere in the United States came in books, newspapers, and abolition societies. But the largest portion of Northern opinion would be satisfied just to see slavery contained within the fifteen states where it had long been legal, and not permitted to spread to the vast territories west of the Mississippi River that would soon be organized into new states. Among these Northerners was Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. “I am naturally anti slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel.” Anyone who “teaches that the negro has no share, humble though it may be” in the Declaration of Independence is “blowing out the moral lights around us” and “penetrating, so far as lies in his power, the human soul, and eradicating the light of reason and the love of liberty.” But Lincoln pulled shy of demanding slavery’s immediate abolition in the Southern states. For one thing, slavery existed in the South under state law, not as part of the federal Constitution, and in Lincoln’s day, that created a constitutional firewall which neither the Northern states nor the federal government could reach over without the federal courts slapping them back. But so long as slavery was not allowed to spread into the territories, Lincoln was certain “the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and put it in course of ultimate extinction.”

But “extinction” was precisely what the slaveholding states did not want. All through the 1850s, they made greater and greater demands for legalizing slavery in the territories, and in 1857, Chief Justice Roger Taney handed them exactly the mandate they wanted. Writing for the U.S. Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, he struck down any barriers the federal government might put in the path of extending slavery into the west. And when the antislavery Republican party ran Lincoln as its candidate for president in 1860, and won on the pledge to overturn *Dred Scott* and prevent that extension, eleven of the slaveholding states announced that they would secede from the Union, and set up their own in-

dependent slave republic, the Confederate States of America. Lincoln refused to recognize the legality of secession, and the Confederates responded by seizing federal property in the South and assaulting Fort Sumter, a federal installation in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. A civil war had begun.

At the outset of the war, Northern abolitionists called on Lincoln to use his “war powers” as commander in chief to declare the slaves in the rebel states free. The problem with this, however, was that no one had a very clear notion of how the president’s “war powers” operated under the Constitution, and whether his authority as commander in chief extended so far as the emancipation of slaves. Lincoln ran afoul of Chief Justice Taney at the very beginning of the conflict by suspending the writ of habeas corpus in order to prevent sabotage along northern railroad lines; he could only imagine how much trouble the courts could make if he tried to reach for an even more unprecedented use of presidential power. Lincoln also had to cope with the fact that four slave states—Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware—that composed the vital borderland between North and South had not joined the Confederacy, and Lincoln could not afford to provoke them by any hasty moves against slavery. Besides, even in the North, the same public opinion that had favored containment rather than abolition would only back a war to restore the Union, not a crusade to liberate black slaves.

At the same time, Lincoln did not lose sight of his overall goal to work for the “ultimate extinction” of slavery. Even though “the general government, sets up no claim of a right, by federal authority, to interfere with slavery within state limits,” Lincoln wrote, nevertheless, “as an anti-slavery man I have a motive to desire emancipation, which pro-slavery men do not have.” In the fall of 1861, he drew up a plan which, beginning with the state of Delaware, would offer a federal buy-out plan to states which would agree to emancipate their slaves by their own legislative act. “If Congress will pass a law authorizing the issuance of bonds for the payment of the emancipated Negroes in the border states,” Lincoln was convinced that, given time, “Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri will accept the terms.” And with the border states secured for emancipation, the Confederacy would realize that its cause was hopeless, and sue for peace—whereupon the buy-out process could be applied to them, as well.

But time was what Lincoln was not given. The Confederates fought well and hard for their independence, while Union victories were few and came slowly. In July of 1862, after the Union’s main army had been pushed back from the gates of the Confederate capital of Richmond, Lincoln arrived to inspect the army personally at its encampment at Harrison’s Landing, on the James river. There, the army’s commander, Major General George B. McClellan, handed Lincoln a letter, warning the president that if he took any steps toward emancipation, the army would refuse to fight. Lincoln returned to Washington, “grieved with what he had witnessed,” and convinced that he had to act, and act now, before the opportunity to emancipate the slaves drifted out of his hands entirely. He could not wait for the border states to take the first step (and in any event, they notified him a week later that they would not co-operate with any proposed buy-out). He had to use his “war powers,” no matter how constitutionally vague or risky. On July 13, he warned two members of his cabinet—Secretary of State William H. Seward and Navy Secretary Gideon Welles—that he had turned to the idea “of . . . emancipating the slaves by proclamation.” Nine days later, on July 22, Lincoln laid before his entire cabinet the first draft of an Emancipation Proclamation.

We know little about how Lincoln wrote the Proclamation. He may have composed a rough sketch as early as June, when he invited Vice President Hannibal Hamlin to the Soldiers’ Home, the president’s summer retreat just outside Washington, and “after supper” read Hamlin the Proclamation behind the locked doors of the “library.” But the crucial reading would be to the Cabinet, and to Lincoln’s relief, their objections were minimal. He had framed the document very carefully, clearly resting the authority for emancipation on his presidential war powers “as a fit and necessary military measure,” but also clearly

cutting right through the ropes of human bondage, ordering that “all persons held as slaves shall then, thenceforward, and forever, be free.” The one objection he took seriously was raised by Secretary of State Seward. With the Union forces reeling from defeat, wouldn’t an Emancipation Proclamation at this time look like a counsel of desperation? Lincoln agreed. He would wait for the first significant Union victory, and then issue the Proclamation.

Instead of victories, the Union armies sustained more defeats, and in September, a Confederate army under Robert E. Lee actually crossed into Maryland, intent on invading the North. Then, on September 17, McClellan and his army pinned the Confederates behind the Antietam Creek in western Maryland and plunged both armies into the deepest bloodbath of the Civil War. The Confederates limped back into Virginia, and though McClellan did little to stop them, Lincoln took this as victory enough. He had, as he explained to Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase, “made a solemn vow before God that if General Lee was driven back. . . I would crown the result by the declaration of freedom to the slaves.” And he was now about to deliver on his promise. News confirming the victory arrived when Lincoln was “staying at the Soldiers’ Home” on September 20. “Here I finished writing the second draft of the preliminary proclamation; came up on Saturday; called the Cabinet together to hear it, and it was published the following Monday.” Not only did this preliminary Proclamation declare the slaves of the Confederacy “then, thenceforward, and forever free,” but it added a pledge that “the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.” The Confederates would have 100 days, until January 1, 1863, to make peace, or the Proclamation would go into legal effect. As he might have expected, the Confederates did nothing but cover his head with denunciations, and so on January 1, 1863, Lincoln signed the final Emancipation Proclamation into law.

Lincoln never entirely quelled his fear that the federal courts would find some way to undermine his exercise of the “war powers.” He had deliberately confined the Proclamation to apply only to slaves “within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States,” and not the border states or even those areas of the Confederacy under federal occupation, so that there would be no doubt of the Proclamation’s standing as a “military necessity.” And he did not wait to see if such a challenge would appear. In 1864, as soon as he felt confident of a Congressional majority, Lincoln put in motion the passage of a thirteenth amendment to the Constitution, permanently banning slavery everywhere in the United States. That, as he remarked, would be “the king’s cure for the evil,” and would put slavery beyond any appeal of the courts.

But Lincoln also realized that the Thirteenth Amendment was only the closing paragraph of a story whose narrative thrust had been begun by the Emancipation Proclamation. “It is the central act of my administration,” he declared, “and the great event of the nineteenth century.”

ALLEN C. GUELZO

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“THE MONSTROUS INJUSTICE OF SLAVERY ITSELF”

Lincoln’s speech against the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854

Before 1850, many Americans who were against slavery believed that the institution would end without government interference. The passage of Stephen A. Douglas’s Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, however, repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and allowed settlers to choose whether slavery would exist in the new territories of Kansas and Nebraska. The possible expansion of slavery above the 36°30' N. boundary established in 1820 galvanized abolitionists and drew Abraham Lincoln back into politics from his legal practice.

In one of the most telling speeches of his career, in Peoria, Ill., on October 16, 1854, he spoke for three hours, asking the crowd to elect Congressmen who would repeal the Kansas-Nebraska Act and reinstate the limits on slavery established in the Missouri Compromise. The ideas presented in these excerpts on slavery, gradual emancipation, colonization, the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and the goals of the founders continued to inform Lincoln’s thinking on slavery and American equality for the next decade.



Abraham Lincoln in 1858.
(Gilder Lehrman Collection)

◆
The repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the propriety of its restoration, constitute the subject of what I am about to say.

. . . And, as this subject is no other, than part and parcel of the larger general question of domestic-slavery, I wish to MAKE and to KEEP the distinction between the EXISTING institution, and the EXTENSION of it, so broad, and so clear, that no honest man can misunderstand me, and no dishonest one, successfully misrepresent me.

. . . I think, and shall try to show, that it is wrong; wrong in its direct effect, letting slavery into Kansas and Nebraska—and wrong in its prospective principle, allowing it to spread to every other part of the wide world, where men can be found inclined to take it.

This declared indifference, but as I must think, covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I can not but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt

us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty—criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.

. . . If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do, as to the existing institution. My first impulse would be to free all the slaves, and send them to Liberia,—to their own native land. But a moment’s reflection would convince me, that whatever of high hope, (as I think there is) there may be in this, in the long run, its sudden execution is impossible. If they were all landed there in a day, they would all perish in the next ten days; and there are not surplus shipping and surplus money enough in the world to carry them there in many times ten days. What then? Free them all, and keep them among us as underlings? Is it quite certain that this

bettors their condition? I think I would not hold one in slavery, at any rate; yet the point is not clear enough for me to denounce people upon. What next? Free them, and make them politically and socially, our equals? My own feelings will not admit of this; and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of white people will not. Whether this feeling accords with justice and sound judgment, is not the sole question, if indeed, it is any part of it. A universal feeling, whether well or ill-founded, can not be safely disregarded. We can not, then, make them equals. It does seem to me that systems of gradual emancipation might be adopted; but for their tardiness in this, I will not undertake to judge our brethren of the south.

. . . What I do say is, that no man is good enough to govern another man, without that other's consent. I say this is the leading principle—the sheet anchor of American republicanism. Our Declaration of Independence says:

“We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, DERIVING THEIR JUST POWERS FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED.”

. . . Let it not be said I am contending for the establishment of political and social equality between the whites and blacks. I have already said the contrary. I am not now combating the argument of NECESSITY, arising from the fact that the blacks are already amongst us; but I am combating what is set up as MORAL argument for allowing them to be taken where they have never yet been—arguing against the EXTENSION of a bad thing, which where it already exists, we must of necessity, manage as we best can.

. . . Nebraska is urged as a great Union-saving measure. Well I too, go for saving the Union. Much as I hate slavery, I would consent to the extension of it rather than see the Union dissolved, just as I would consent to any GREAT evil, to avoid a GREATER one. But when I go to Union saving, I must believe, at least, that the means I employ has some adaptation to the end. To my mind, Nebraska has no such adaptation.

. . . I particularly object to the NEW position which the avowed principle of this Nebraska law gives to slavery in the body politic. I object to it because it assumes that there CAN be MORAL RIGHT in the enslaving of one man by another. I object to it as a dangerous dalliance for a free people—a sad evidence that, feeling prosperity we forget right—that liberty, as a principle, we have ceased to revere. I object to it because the fathers of the republic eschewed, and rejected it. The argument of “Necessity” was the only argument they ever admitted in favor of slavery; and so far, and so far only as it carried them, did they ever go. . . . The plain unmistakable spirit of that age, towards slavery, was hostility to the PRINCIPLE, and toleration, ONLY BY NECESSITY.

. . . Let us turn slavery from its claims of “moral right,” back upon its existing legal rights, and its arguments of “necessity.” Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it; and there let it rest in peace. Let us re-adopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it, the practices, and policy, which harmonize with it. Let north and south—let all Americans—let all lovers of liberty everywhere—join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union; but we shall have so saved it, as to make, and to keep it, forever worthy of the saving. We shall have so saved it, that the succeeding millions of free happy people, the world over, shall rise up, and call us blessed, to the latest generations.

I have never professed an indifference to the honors of official station; and were I to do so now, I should only make myself ridiculous. Yet I have never failed—do not now fail—to remember that in the republican cause there is a higher aim than that of mere office—I have not allowed myself to forget that the abolition of the slave-trade by Great Britain, was agitated a hundred years before it was a final success; that the measure had its open fire-eating opponents; its stealthy "doubt can" opponents; its dollar and cent opponents; its inferior race opponents; its negro equality opponents; and its religion and good order opponents; that all these opponents got offices, and their adversaries got none—but I have also remembered that ^{they} they blazed like tallow-candles for a century, at least they flickered in the socket, drew out, stank in the dark for a brief season, and were remembered no more, even by the smell—School-boys know that Wilberforce, and Granville Sharpe, kept that cause forward, but who can now name a single man who labored to retard it? Remembering these things, I can not but regard it as possible that the higher object of this contest may not be completely attained within

Notes by Abraham Lincoln for a speech on the abolition of slavery for the Senate campaign of 1858. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

“TO CONTRIBUTE AN HUMBLE MITE TO THAT GLORIOUS CONSUMMATION”

Notes by Abraham Lincoln for a campaign speech in the
Senate race against Stephen A. Douglas, 1858

Opposition to slavery and concerns about free labor and other national economic issues led to the founding of the Republican Party. Lincoln was involved in the earliest days of the party in Illinois and quickly established himself as one of its leading activists. When U.S. Senator Stephen A. Douglas came up for reelection in 1858, the Republicans in Illinois selected Lincoln to run against him. The campaign, and particularly the series of seven debates the two candidates held across the state, made Lincoln famous in Illinois and across the country. Many of the debates were focused on the question of slavery's expansion and the future of the institution in the nation as a whole.

The notes reprinted here were prepared by Lincoln for the stump speeches he would make throughout the campaign. They make clear his opposition to slavery and his historical perspective on the preceding generations who had long fought to end it in Britain and America.



I have never professed an indifference to the honors of official station; and were I to do so now, I should only make myself ridiculous. Yet I have never failed—do not now fail—to remember that in the republican cause there is a higher aim than that of mere office—I have not allowed myself to forget that the abolition of the Slave-trade by Great Britain, was agitated a hundred years before it was a final success; that the measure had its open fire-eating opponents; its stealthy “dont care” opponents; its dollar and cent opponents; its inferior race opponents; its negro equality opponents; and its religion and good order opponents; that all these opponents got offices, and their adversaries got none—But I have also remembered that though they blazed, like tallow-candles for a century, at last they flickered in the socket, died out, stank in the dark for a brief season, and were remembered no more, even by the smell— School-boys know that Wilbe[r]force, and Granville Sharpe, helped that cause forward; but who can now name a single man who labored to retard it? Remembering these things I can not but regard it as possible that the higher object of this contest may not be completely attained within the term of my natural life. But I can not doubt either that it will come in due time. Even in this view, I am proud, in my passing speck of time, to contribute an humble mite to that glorious consummation, which my own poor eyes may ~~never~~ not last to see—



INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

ON

*The Fourth of March, 1861.*MARCH 8, 1861.—Ordered to be printed.

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES: In compliance with a custom as old as the Government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take in your presence the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States to be taken by the President "before he enters on the execution of his office."

I do not consider it necessary at present for me to discuss those matters of administration about which there is no special anxiety or excitement.

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. And, more than this, they placed in the platform for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read :

“I HAVE NO LAWFUL RIGHT TO DO SO”

Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861

Faced with the secession of Southern states from the Union he had sworn to protect, Lincoln used his first inaugural address to reach out diplomatically to the South and reassure Southerners that he did not intend “directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so.” As shown in the excerpts reprinted here, he focused on the indissolubility of the U.S. Constitution as a contract among the states and the need to follow “dry legal obligation” even despite being morally opposed to a law itself.



. . . Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.”

. . . [n]o organic law can ever be framed with a provision specifically applicable to every question which may occur in practical administration. No foresight can anticipate nor any document of reasonable length contain express provisions for all possible questions. Shall fugitives from labor be surrendered by national or by State authority? The Constitution does not expressly say. May Congress prohibit slavery in the Territories? The Constitution does not expressly say. Must Congress protect slavery in the Territories? The Constitution does not expressly say.

From questions of this class spring all our constitutional controversies, and we divide upon them into majorities and minorities. If the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the Government must cease.

. . . One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive-slave clause of the Constitution and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave trade are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, can not be perfectly cured, and it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections than before.

. . . In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to “preserve, protect, and defend it.”

I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.



GRADUAL ABOLISHMENT OF SLAVERY.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN RELATION TO

Co-operating with any State for the gradual abolishment of slavery.

MARCH 6, 1862. —Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, and ordered to be printed.

Fellow-citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

I recommend the adoption of a joint resolution by your honorable bodies, which shall be substantially as follows:

"*Resolved*, That the United States ought to co-operate with any State which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system."

If the proposition contained in the resolution does not meet the approval of Congress and the country, there is the end; but if it does command such approval, I deem it of importance that the States and people immediately interested should be at once distinctly notified of the fact, so that they may begin to consider whether to accept or reject it. The federal government would find its highest interest in such a measure, as one of the most efficient means of self-preservation. The leaders of the existing insurrection entertain the hope that this government will ultimately be forced to acknowledge the independence of some part of the disaffected region, and that all the slave States north of such part will then say, "the Union for which we have struggled being already gone, we now choose to go with the southern section." To deprive them of this hope substantially ends the rebellion; and the initiation of emancipation completely deprives them of it as to all the States initiating it. The point is not that *all* the States tolerating slavery would very soon, if at all, initiate emancipation, but that while the offer is equally made to all, the more northern shall, by such initiation, make it certain to the more southern that in no event will the former ever join the latter in their proposed confederacy. I say "initiation," because in my judgment gradual, and not sudden, emancipation is better for all. In the mere financial or pecuniary view, any member of Congress, with the census tables and treasury reports before him, can readily see for himself how very soon the current expenditures of this war would purchase, at fair valuation, all the slaves in any named State. Such a proposition on the part of the general government sets up no claim of a

“ADOPT GRADUAL ABOLISHMENT OF SLAVERY”

Message from President Lincoln to Congress, March 6, 1862

Lincoln was keenly aware that, despite the power of the Presidency, he had no constitutional authority to abolish slavery, which was primarily a matter of state rather than federal law. He tried, however, to employ indirect means to persuade slave states to abandon the institution on their own. Late in 1861, Lincoln wrote a proposal for compensated emancipation that he hoped the Delaware legislature would adopt. It exemplified his desire, as he wrote to Horace Greeley, abolitionist and editor of the New York Tribune, on March 24, that the end of slavery would “have the three main features—gradual—compensation—and vote of the people.”

In the spring of 1862, Lincoln introduced the resolution printed here in Congress to provide financial aid to states that chose to end slavery, which was adopted by both houses in April. Unfortunately, no border state chose to take advantage of the provision. The President also met repeatedly with representatives from the slave-holding border states to encourage them to pass legislation ending slavery, warning them that otherwise it would “be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion—by the mere incidents of the war.” And, between September 1862 and January 1, 1863, he used the threat of the Emancipation Proclamation to try to persuade the Confederate states to rejoin the Union with compensated emancipation to prevent the harsher consequences.



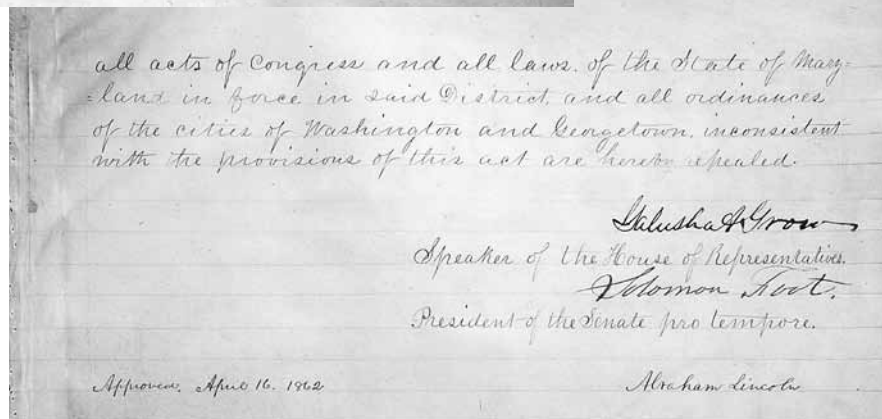
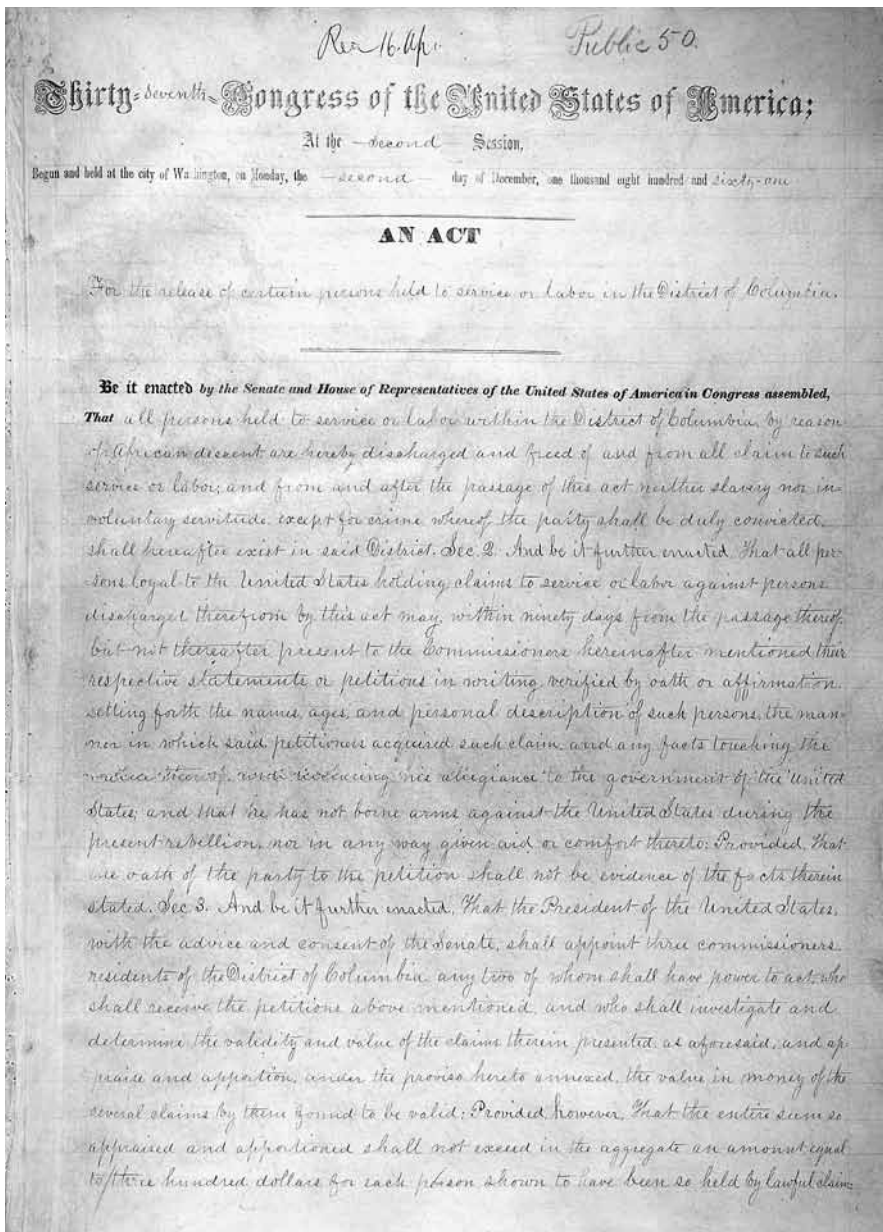
Fellow-citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

I recommend the adoption of a joint resolution by your honorable bodies, which shall be substantially as follows:

“*Resolved*, That the United States ought to co-operate with any State which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system.”

If the proposition contained in the resolution does not meet the approval of Congress and the country, there is the end; but if it does command such approval, I deem it of importance that the States and people immediately interested should be at once distinctly notified of the fact, so that they may begin to consider whether to accept or reject it. The federal government would find its highest interest in such a measure, as one of the most efficient means of self-preservation. The leaders of the existing insurrection entertain the hope that this government will ultimately be forced to acknowledge the independence of some part of the disaffected region, and that all the slave States north of such part will then say, “the Union for which we have struggled being already gone, we now choose to go with the southern section.” To deprive them of this hope substantially ends the rebellion; and the initiation of emancipation completely deprives them of it as to all the States initiating it. The point is not that *all* the States tolerating slavery would very soon, if at all, initiate emancipation, but that while the offer is equally made to all, the more northern shall, but such initiation, make it certain to the more southern that in no event will the former ever join the latter in their proposed confederacy. I say “initiation,” because in my judgment gradual, and not sudden, emancipation is better for all. In the mere financial or pecuniary view, any member of Congress, with the census tables and treasury reports before him, can readily see for himself how very soon the current expenditures of this war would purchase, at fair valuation, all the slaves in any named State. Such a proposition on the part of the general government sets up no claim of a right by federal authority to interfere with slavery within State limits, referring as it does the absolute control of the subject in each case to the State and its people immediately interested. It is proposed as a matter of perfectly free choice with them. . . .





The first and last pages of "An Act for the Release of certain Persons held to Service or Labor in the District of Columbia," signed into law by Abraham Lincoln on April 16, 1862. (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)

**“NEITHER SLAVERY NOR INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE . . . SHALL
HEREAFTER EXIST IN SAID DISTRICT”**

The abolition of slavery in Washington, D.C., April 16, 1862

Only federally controlled Washington, D.C., carried out a compensated emancipation plan, established by an act of Congress, and not a popular vote. On April 16, 1862, Lincoln signed the law, excerpted below, and wrote to Congress: “I am gratified that the two principles of compensation, and colonization, are both recognized, and practically applied in the Act.” Under the law, 3,000 slaves in D.C. were freed and nearly one million dollars in compensation was paid to their former owners. There is no evidence that any of those freed accepted the government’s offer of financial help to go to Haiti or Africa.



An Act

For the release of certain persons held to service or labor in the District of Columbia

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all persons held to service or labor within the District of Columbia by reason of African descent are hereby discharged and freed of and from all claim to such service or labor; and from and after the passage of this act neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for crime, whereof the party shall be duly convicted, shall hereafter exist in said District. Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That all persons loyal to the United States, holding claims to service or labor against persons discharged therefrom by this act, may, within ninety days from the passage thereof, but not thereafter, present to the Commissioners hereinafter mentioned their respective statements or petitions in writing, verified by oath or affirmation, setting forth the names, ages, and personal description of such persons, the manner in which said petitioners acquired such claim, and any facts touching the value thereof, and declaring his allegiance to the government of the United States, and that he has not borne arms against the United States during the present rebellion, nor in any way given aid or comfort thereto: Provided, That the oath of the party to the petition shall not be evidence of the facts therein stated.

[Sec. 3–7 establish a commission to determine the compensation due each slaveholder and a fund of \$1 million.]

Sec. 8. And be it further enacted, That any person or persons who shall kidnap, or in any manner transport or procure to be taken out of said District, any person or persons discharged and freed by the provisions of this act, or any free person or persons with intent to re-enslave or sell such person or persons into slavery, or shall re-enslave any of said freed persons, the person or persons so offending shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and on conviction thereof in any court of competent jurisdiction in said District, shall be imprisoned in the penitentiary not less than five nor more than twenty years.

[Sec. 9 & 10 order records to be kept of claims and certificates provided to the emancipated slaves.]

Sec. 11. And be it further enacted, That the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, is hereby appropriated, to be expended under the direction of the President of the United States, to aid in the colonization and settlement of such free persons of African descent now residing in said District, including those to be liberated by this act, as may desire to emigrate to the Republics of Hayti or Liberia, or such other country beyond the limits of the United States as the President may determine: Provided, The expenditure for this purpose shall not exceed one hundred dollars for each emigrant. Sec. 12. And be it further enacted, That all acts of Congress and all laws of the State of Maryland in force in said District, and all ordinances of the cities of Washington and Georgetown, inconsistent with the provisions of this act, are hereby repealed.





"The First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, July 22, 1862," a print based on a painting by Francis Bicknell Carpenter. (Private Collection)

In pursuance of the sixth section of the act
 of Congress entitled "An act to suppress insurrection
 and to punish treason and rebellion, to seize and
 confiscate property of rebels, and for other purposes,"
 Approved July 17, 1862, and which act, and the
 Joint Resolution explanatory thereof, are herewith
 published, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of
 the United States, do hereby proclaim to, and
 warn all persons within the contemplation of
 said sixth section to cease participating in, aid-
 ing, countenancing, or abetting the existing rebel-
 lion, or any rebellion against the government
 of the United States, and to return to their pro-
 per allegiance to the United States, on pain of the
 forfeitures and seizures, as within and by said
 sixth section provided.

And I hereby make known that it is my
 purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress, to again
 recommend the adoption of a practical measure
 for tending pecuniary aid to the free choice or
 rejection, of any and all States, which may then
 be recognizing and practically sustaining the author-
 ity of the United States, and which may then have
 voluntarily adopted, or hereafter may voluntarily
 adopt, gradual ^{abolition} ~~abolition~~ of slavery within
 such State or States, that the object is to main-
 tain, thenceforward to ^{be} maintain, the con-
 stitutional relation between the general government,
 and each, and all the States, wherein that relation

17232

The first page of Abraham Lincoln's first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, July 22, 1862. (Library of Congress Manuscripts Division)

“THENCEFORWARD, AND FOREVER, BE FREE”

Lincoln’s first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, July 22, 1862

When state-level legislated emancipation failed, Lincoln was left with another tool for emancipating slaves. As commander in chief, he could use his war powers to declare slaves free, but only in the regions actively in rebellion against the United States. Following an unfruitful discussion about compensated emancipation with representatives from the slave-holding border states and the passage on July 17, 1862, of the Second Confiscation Act allowing the Union army to confiscate the property of rebels, Lincoln called his Cabinet together for a special meeting.

Lincoln presented his Emancipation Proclamation to the Cabinet on July 22, 1862, asking for their suggestions, but making it clear that he was resolved to issue it. The members of the Cabinet supported his decision with some reservations, and Secretary of State William Seward persuaded him to wait for a Union military victory before announcing the proclamation publicly.



In pursuance of the sixth section of the act of congress entitled “An act to suppress insurrection and to punish treason and rebellion, to seize and confiscate property of rebels, and for other purposes” Approved July 17. 1862, and which act, and the Joint Resolution explanatory thereof, are herewith published, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby proclaim to, and warn all persons within the contemplation of said sixth section to cease participating in, aiding, countenancing, or abetting the existing rebellion, or any rebellion against the government of the United States, and to return to their proper allegiance to the United States, on pain of the forfeitures and seizures, as within and by said sixth section provided.

And I hereby make known that it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress, to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure for tendering pecuniary aid to the free choice or rejection, of any and all States which may then be recognizing and practically sustaining the authority of the United States, and which may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, gradual ~~adoption~~ abolishment of slavery within such State or States – that the object is to practically restore, thenceforward to be maintain[ed], the constitutional relation between the general government, and each, and all the states, wherein that relation is now suspended, or disturbed; and that, for this object, the war, as it has been, will be, prosecuted. And, as a fit and necessary military measure for effecting this object, I, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, do order and declare that on the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand, eight hundred and sixtythree, all persons held as slaves within any state or states, wherein the constitutional authority of the United States shall not then be practically recognized, submitted to, and maintained, shall then, thenceforward, and forever, be free.



By the President of the
United States of America
Proclamation

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare that hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States, and each of the states, and the people thereof, in which states that relation ~~is~~ ^{or may be} suspended, or disturbed.

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave-states, so called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States, and which states ^{and} may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate or gradual abolition of slavery within their respective limits; and that the effort to colonize persons of African descent upon this continent, or elsewhere, will be continued.

The first page of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862. (New York State Library)

“NO SLAVE ESCAPING . . . SHALL BE DELIVERED UP”

Lincoln's Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862

Union success at Antietam, Maryland, on September 17, 1862, provided the opportune moment to announce the Emancipation Proclamation to the public. Lincoln brought his revised draft of the Proclamation to his Cabinet on September 22, 1862. Secretary of State Seward suggested several changes (shown below as words crossed out or as additions in brackets), and the Proclamation was issued. It appeared in major Northern newspapers on September 23, 1862.



By the President of the
United States of America
A Proclamation

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare that hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States, and each of the states, and the people thereof, in which states that relation is, or may be suspended or disturbed.

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave-states, so called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States, and which states ~~and~~ may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate, or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits; and that the effort to colonize persons of African descent [with their consent] upon this continent, or elsewhere, [with the previously obtained consent of the Governments existing there,] will be continued.

That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States [including the military and naval authority thereof] will, ~~during the continuance in office of the present incumbent~~, recognize [and maintain the freedom of] such persons, ~~as being free~~, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States, and parts of states, if any, in which the people thereof respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any state, or the people thereof shall, on that day be, in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States, by members chosen thereto, at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such state shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such state and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.

That attention is hereby called to an Act of Congress entitled “An Act to make an additional Article of War” approved March 13, 1862, and which act is in the words and figure following:

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled. That hereafter the following shall be promulgated as an additional article of war for the government of the army of the United States, and shall be obeyed and observed as such:

Article—. All officers or persons in the military or naval service of the United States are prohibited

(Transcript continued on page 23)



That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government, ^{including the military and naval authority thereof} of the United States, will, ~~during the con-~~
~~tinuance in office of the present incumbent,~~ ^{and maintain the freedom of}
 cognize, such persons, ~~as being free,~~ and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the states, and parts of states, if any, in which the people thereof respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any state, or the people thereof shall, on that day be, in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States, by members chosen there, at elections wherein a majority of the

The second page of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862. (New York State Library)

(Transcript continued from page 21)

from employing any of the forces under their respective commands for the purpose of returning fugitives from service or labor, who may have escaped from any persons to whom such service or labor is claimed to be due and any officer who shall be found guilty by a court martial of violating this article shall be dismissed from the service.

SEC.2. And be it further enacted, that this act shall take effect from and after its passage.”

Also to the ninth and tenth sections of an act entitled “An Act to suppress Insurrection, to punish Treason and Rebellion, to seize and confiscate property of rebels, and for other purposes,” approved July 17, 1862, and which sections are in the words and figures following:

SEC. 9. And be it further enacted, that all slaves of persons who shall hereafter be engaged in rebellion against the government of the United States, or who shall in any way give aid or comfort thereto, escaping from such persons and taking refuge within the lines of the army; and all slaves captured from such persons or deserted by them and coming under the control of the government of the United States; and all slaves of such persons found [or] being within any place occupied by rebel forces and afterwards occupied by the forces of the United States, shall be deemed captives of war, and shall be forever free of their servitude, and not again held as slaves.

SEC. 10. And be it further enacted, That no slave escaping into any State, Territory, or the District of Columbia, from any other State, shall be delivered up, or in any way impeded or hindered of his liberty, except for crime, or some offence against the laws, unless the person claiming said fugitive shall first make oath that the person to whom the labor or service of such fugitive is alleged to be due is his lawful owner, and has not borne arms against the United States in the present rebellion, nor in any way given aid and comfort thereto; and no person engaged in the military or naval service of the United States shall, under any pretence whatever, assume to decide on the validity of the claim of any person to the service or labor of any other person, or surrender up any such person to the claimant, on pain of being dismissed from the service.

And I do hereby enjoin upon and order all persons engaged in the military and naval service of the United States to observe, obey, and enforce, within their respective spheres of service, the act and sections above recited.

And the executive will [in due time] ~~[at the next session of congress]~~ recommend that all citizens of the United States who shall have remained loyal thereto throughout the rebellion, shall (upon the restoration of the constitutional relation between the United States, and their respective states, and people, if that relation shall have been suspended or disturbed) be compensated for all losses by acts of the United States, including the loss of slaves.

L.S. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this twenty second day of September, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty two, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President
William H. Seward,
Secretary of State

By the President of the United States of America:

A. Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day

The first page of the clerk's handwritten copy of the final Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863. (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)

**“THIS ACT, SINCERELY BELIEVED TO BE AN ACT OF JUSTICE,
WARRANTED BY THE CONSTITUTION”**

Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863

President Lincoln continued to revise the Proclamation until the day it was officially enacted. Since it was a measure authorized by his war powers as commander in chief, it was presented to the military as General Orders No. 1 on January 2, 1863. Lincoln checked with his generals and advisors up until the last minute to ensure that the Confederate regions then under Union authority—and therefore exempt from the Proclamation—were properly noted.



By the President of the United States of America:
A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

“That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.”

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all

(Transcript continued on page 26)



(Transcript continued from page 25)

persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WILLIAM H. SEWARD
Secretary of State.



Abraham Lincoln.
President of the United States.
 by virtue of the power in me vested
 as Commander in Chief of the Army and
 Navy of the United States, in time of
 actual armed rebellion against the authority
 and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppress-
 ing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand
 eight hundred and sixty three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the
 full period of one hundred days from the day of the first above mentioned order, and designate as the times
 and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively are this day in rebellion against the United States; the
 following, to wit: Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana — except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemine &
 Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary,
 St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans — Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia,
 South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia — except the forty eight counties designated as West Virginia,
 and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk,
 including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely
 as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all
 persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are and henceforward
 shall be free; and that the executive government of the United States, including the military
 and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence,
 unless in necessary self defense; and I recommend to them that in all cases when allowed, they
 labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons, of suitable condition, will
 be received into the armed service of the United States, to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other
 places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution,
 upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of

Almighty God

Abraham Lincoln

Printed and published by A. C. Speller, 1863

Preserved by J. L. Wright

This lithograph of the Emancipation Proclamation was designed by a 14-year-old boy in California and sent to President Lincoln for his signature. Printed in San Francisco in 1864, it is one of only a few copies of the Proclamation signed by Lincoln. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)



“President Lincoln, Writing the Proclamation of Freedom,” a lithograph based on a painting by David Gilmour Blythe, printed by Ehrgott, Forbriger & Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, 1863. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)



“Writing the Emancipation Proclamation,” an etching by V. Blada [Adalbert J. Volck], c. 1864. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

TWO POLITICAL CARTOONS OF LINCOLN DRAFTING THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION IN 1862

In an age before radio, television, and the Internet, many Americans received news and expressed their opinions about politicians and presidents through newspapers. Political cartoons appeared in newspapers and were sold individually as prints in shops, on street corners, and by mail. They invite us to put aside 21st-century assumptions and look at events through the eyes of people living in the era.



In the top image on the opposite page, “President Lincoln, Writing the Proclamation of Freedom,” Lincoln sits in a flag-draped room at a table, with the Bible in his left hand and the Constitution on his lap. The room is filled with symbols that reaffirm the importance of his act: the scales of justice, the Presidential Oath, several petitions against slavery, and a globe and various maps. In the background, a bust of Lincoln’s ineffectual predecessor, James Buchanan, hangs suggestively from a noose.

“Writing the Emancipation Proclamation” was created by a Confederate sympathizer. The artist depicts Lincoln writing the Proclamation with ink from a well held by the devil, while trampling the Constitution underfoot. On the walls are depictions of the bloody slave uprising in Haiti (“Santo Domingo”) in the 1790s, and radical abolitionist John Brown’s violence in Kansas in the 1850s (“Osawatomie” was the site of a battle between pro- and antislavery settlers instigated by Brown in “Bleeding Kansas” in 1856).



It must close by next Spring, if it does
not I shall almost begin to think that we
never ought to whip them. Thank God
a new era has dawned, the car of
liberty ^{and} civilisation is rolling on. I have re-
ference to the President's proclamation, the
"year of Jubilee" has indeed come to the poor
Slave. The proclamation is a deathblow to
Slavery, because without doubt a majority
of the Slave States will be in arms against
the Government on the 1st of January 1862.
The name of Abraham Lincoln will be handed
down to posterity as one of the greatest benefac-
tors of his Country, not surpassed by the
immortal Washington himself. It is what
I have expected, and what I have hoped for,
we now know what we are fighting for, we
have an object, and that object is a woman.
Now we may expect that the armies of
the Union will be victorious, that an
omnipotent and just God will favor us, and
crown our efforts with success. Oh, what

The second page of a letter from John P. Jones, a Union soldier from Illinois, to his wife, October 3, 1862. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

“THE ‘YEAR OF JUBILEE’ HAS INDEED COME TO THE POOR SLAVE”

A Union soldier responds to the Emancipation Proclamation

John P. Jones to his wife, October 3, 1862

The Emancipation Proclamation changed the war's political objectives on both sides, arousing a variety of responses from Union soldiers as well as Confederate. Some Northerners resented it. Others feared it would harden the resolve of the South. Sgt. George Tillotson of New York wrote that he knew “enough of the southern spirit so that I think that they will fight for the institution of slavery . . . to extermination.” By the end of the war, however, Tillotson supported Lincoln and emancipation.

Other Union soldiers, such as John P. Jones of Illinois, whose letter is excerpted here, celebrated the news as a turning point in the war and in American history. Jones, a lieutenant in Company F, 45th Illinois Infantry, rejoiced that “a new era has dawned, the car of liberty and civilization is rolling on. . . . We now know what we are fighting for.”



Jackson Tenn. Oct. 3/1862

My Dear Wife

I received your letter yesterday, and now proceed to answer it, as I have a little time on my hands this evening, and I do not know that I can spend it in a more profitable way. Certainly I can not spend it in a more agreeable way than in writing to one in whom my fondest hopes of happiness are centered. It is just a year ago today Mary that I became a Servant of Uncle Sam, I hardly thought then that I should have to be a Soldier So long as a year, but now, I dont know, but my chance is good for a year or two more. Well one third of my time is Served at any rate, even if the war lasts So long, but I do not think it will. It must close by next Spring, if it does not I shall almost begin to think that we never ought to whip them. Thank God a new era has dawned, the car of liberty and civilization is rolling on. I have reference to the Presidents proclamation. The “year of jubilee” has indeed come to the poor Slave. The proclamation is a deathblow to Slavery, because without doubt a majority of the Slave States will be in arms against the Government on the 1st of January 186[3] The name of Abraham Lincoln will be handed down to posterity, as one of the greatest benefactors of his country, not surpassed by the immortal Washington himself. It is what I have expected and what I have hoped for. We now know what we are fighting for, we have an object, and that object is avowed. Now we may expect that the armies of the Union will be victorious, that an Omnipotent and just God will favor us, and crown our efforts with success. Oh! what a day for rejoicing will it be, when America the boasted “land of the free and home of the brave” shall have erased from its fair escutcheon the black Stain of human Slavery. The majority of the people, and of the Soldiers will sustain the President in his act, it is well received by the army in this department, believed to be the right thing, at the right time. . . .

I expect you will write again before you get this, if you send me anything in addition to those shirts you may send me a pair of stockings if you can get them handily. Edwins box came safely at last. I must close

Your affectionate Husband

John P. Jones



the greater exertions you
must use -
I think Lincoln's proclamation
will produce dissensions
and trouble at the North,
and will thus indirectly
benefit our cause. The
Democratic party there is
not willing to go headlong
into any abolition war.
and the elections will
show that Lincoln's policy
will be condemned. Give
my best love to your little
brother and sister and
write to me as often as
you wish. It will help
to improve you in writing
and in expressing your
thoughts. Be a good boy
and take care of your
beautiful mother while
I am gone. A kiss for
Mamma and "Dad's gal"
Yours aff. father
M. Lovell

The second page of a letter from Mansfield Lovell, a Confederate general from Washington, D.C., to his son, Joseph, October 30, 1862. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

“LINCOLN’S PROCLAMATION WILL PRODUCE DISSENSIONS
AND TROUBLE AT THE NORTH”

A Confederate general responds to the Emancipation Proclamation

Mansfield Lovell to his son, Joseph, October 30, 1862

Reactions in the South were predictably virulent all around, from politicians, soldiers, and civilians. Confederate General Mansfield Lovell wrote to his son Joseph predicting (wrongly, as it turned out) that the North would not support an “abolition war.”



Holly Springs—30 Oct 1862.

I received your letter, my dear Jos. with those of little Mamie and Kid a day or two Since. Tell mother she must put you all to school, no matter what it costs and that she must have you escort her to table if it does take thirty dollars a month more. I am glad to hear that you are improving in arithmetic, my Son. You do not take to it easily or naturally and for that reason will have to apply yourself more studiously, than you would to anything that you learned without trouble. The greater the difficulty of any study the greater exertion you must use—

I think Lincoln’s proclamation will produce dissensions and trouble at the North, and will thus indirectly benefit our Cause. The Democratic party there is not willing to go headlong into any abolition war. And the elections will show that Lincoln’s policy will be condemned. Give my best love to your little brother and sister and write to me as often as you wish. It will help to improve you in writing in expressing your thoughts. Be a good boy and take care of your beautiful mother while I am gone. A Kiss for Mamie and “Dad’s gal”

Your aff. father
M Lovell



“OUR NATIONAL SIN THE ABOMINATION OF HUMAN BONDAGE”

A loyal civilian responds to the Emancipation Proclamation

Amos Lewis to his nephew, January 16, 1863

Amos Lewis, at home in Wisconsin, was a fierce abolitionist who welcomed the Emancipation Proclamation but regretted that it did not go far enough to remedy the injustice of slavery. In the ardor of his convictions, he failed to realize that the limited scope of the Proclamation was due to its design as a military measure that could only affect the states in active rebellion. Constitutionally, Lincoln had no authority to end slavery in the loyal states.



Magnolia Jan. 16th 1863

Dear Nephew,

. . . It is a time of health in this place and our relatives are all in tolerable good health. I am afflicted bad with ulcerated sore legs, about laid up, and I expect it is an entailed inheritance. May the good Lord help me to be resigned. Three of your aunt's boys are in the service of the country, as far as we know they remain unharmed. The last news we have had from Esther she was matron in the hospital in Springfield Mo. her son Webster was Uncle Sam's printer at Hellena Ark.

. . . When war began I was full of patriotism as my skin could hold, nothing hindered me from taking up arms but age and infirmity, but my skin is so porous it has in a great degree escaped and mingled with the darkened atmosphere that seems to hang like a funeral pall over the nation. My ardor which seemed to burn like torrid heat has turned to the temperature of the frigid zone. The northern army of a million men has thus far failed to put down this thrice wicked rebellion. The hellish rage of Rebeldom is rampant still as when the first gun was discharged at Sumpters feeble band. And what is the matter? has southern soil become so sterile by slave labor that it requires fields of the blood of men and beasts to restore its native productiveness so that a few freed men, if any are left after the willing to emigrate are gone to some colony can raise a living for their aristocratic masters at low wages? Or does the God of Heaven mean to destroy both north and south for our national Sin the abomination of humane bondage? Will the god of mercy have compassion on us.

The partial Proclamation has gone forth from the Whitehouse that the slaves of rebels shall go free while the slaves of union men are to remain in bondage till dooms day unless their masters are willing to sell them to the government for a stipulated price. The day has gone bye and the [inocent] darkies are, or have been looking up for liberty from bondage worse than that of [egyptian]. But how is the Proclamation to be inforced? Through fields of blood 'and carnage, sounding in death groans,' for the rebels never will surrender their long loved institution only at the cannon's mouth or at the point of the bayonet. why did not the Doctor remove the cause before patient was worn out by disease, he knew how but was afraid to administer the proper remedy for fear the bill would not be large enough or that the border states would be lost to the Union. I am not alone in this congealed position. But let us wait and see if a more genial sun will not dispell the clouds of this dark day and a brighter sun once more shine on this temperate zone.

Yours as ever

Seth Lewis

Amos Lewis

PS Give my respects to your lady and family, how I wish I could see how they look.



Executive Mansion,

Washington, April 4, 1864.

A. G. Hodges, Esq,

Frankfort, Ky.

My dear Sir:

You ask me to put in writing the substance of what I verbally said the other day, in your presence, to Governor Bramlette and Senator Dixon. It was about as follows:

"I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I have that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand ^{however} ~~hence~~, that my oath to preserve the Constitution, to the best of my ability, imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government—the nation—of which that Constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation, and ^{yet} preserve the Constitution?

32077

The first page of a letter from Abraham Lincoln to A.G. Hodges, April 4, 1864. (Library of Congress Manuscripts Division)

“IF SLAVERY IS NOT WRONG, NOTHING IS WRONG”

Abraham Lincoln on the enlistment of African American soldiers, April 4, 1864

In addition to emancipating slaves in Confederate-held regions, the Emancipation Proclamation authorized the enlistment of African Americans as soldiers. Union generals had occasionally formed regiments of “contraband,” or fugitive slaves, in the occupied South, but there had been no official recruitment of black troops until the Proclamation made it possible.

Slaveholders in border states were concerned about this clause, particularly when the Union military enlisted slaves over their masters’ objections. Several representatives from Kentucky went to Washington to discuss their concerns with Lincoln in March 1864. One of them, newspaper editor A.G. Hodges, asked Lincoln to put his speech to them in writing. Lincoln’s letter describing his reasons for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation and, in particular, his recognition that the war could not be won without the enlistment of African American troops is printed here.



Executive Mansion,

Washington, April 4, 1864.

A.G. Hodges, Esq.

Frankfort, Ky.

My dear Sir:

You ask me to put in writing the substance of what I verbally said the other day, in your presence, to Governor Bramlette and Senator Dixon— It was about as follows:

“I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand ~~however~~, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability, imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government—that nation—of which that Constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation, and yet preserve the Constitution? By general law life and limb must be protected; yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life; but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution, through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the Constitution, if, to save slavery, or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of government, country, and ~~Constitution~~ Constitution all together. When, early in the war, Gen. Fremont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When a little later, Gen. Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected, because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When, still later, Gen. Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity

(Transcript continued on page 38)



(Transcript continued from page 37)

had come. When, in March, and May, and July 1862 I made earnest, and successive appeals to the border states to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation, and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition; and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it, the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss; but of this, I was not entirely confident. More than a year of trial now shows no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force, — no loss by it any how, or any where. On the contrary, it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen, and laborers. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts, there can be no cavilling-- We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure

And now let any Union man who complains of the measure, test himself by writing down in one line that he is for subduing the rebellion by force of arms; and in the next, that he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be but for the measures he condemns. If he can not face his case so stated, it is only because he can not face the truth.

I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein ~~no~~ new cause to ~~question~~ ~~applaud~~ attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

Yours truly

A. Lincoln

Here the men of Company E, 4th United States Colored Infantry are photographed in their dress uniforms at Fort Lincoln in Washington, D.C., c. 1864. The 4th was recruited in Maryland and saw action in several battles, including the second battle of Petersburg, Virginia, in June 1863. Three of the regiment's men received the medal of honor for their actions at the battle of Chaffin Farm in September 1863. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)



MEN OF COLOR TO ARMS! TO ARMS! NOW OR NEVER

This is our golden moment! The Government of the United States calls for every Able-bodied Colored Man to enter the Army for the

Three Years' Service!

And join in Fighting the Battles of Liberty and the Union. A new era is open to us. For generations we have suffered under the horrors of slavery, outrage and wrong; our manhood has been denied, our citizenship blotted out, our souls seared and burned, our spirits cowed and crushed, and the hopes of the future of our race involved in doubt and darkness. But now our relations to the white race are changed. Now, therefore, is our most precious moment. Let us rush to arms!

FAIL NOW, & OUR RACE IS DOOMED

On this the soil of our birth. We must now awake, arise, or be forever fallen. If we value liberty, if we wish to be free in this land, if we love our country, if we love our families, our children, our home, we must strike now while the country calls; we must rise up in the dignity of our manhood, and show by our own right arms that we are worthy to be freemen. Our enemies have made the country believe that we are craven cowards, without soul, without manhood, without the spirit of soldiers. Shall we die with this stigma resting upon our graves! Shall we leave this inheritance of Shame to our Children! No! a thousand times NO! We WILL Rise! The alternative is upon us. Let us rather die freemen than live to be slaves. What is life without liberty! We say that we have manhood; now is the time to prove it. A nation or a people that cannot fight may be pitied, but cannot be respected. If we would be regarded men, if we would forever silence the tongue of Calumny, of Prejudice and Hate, let us Rise Now and Fly to Arms! We have seen what Valor and Heroism our Brothers displayed at Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend, though they are just from the galling, poisoning grasp of Slavery, they have startled the World by the most exalted heroism. If they have proved themselves heroes, cannot WE PROVE OURSELVES MEN!

ARE FREEMEN LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES

More than a Million White Men have left Comfortable Homes and joined the Armies of the Union to save their Country. Cannot we leave ours, and swell the Hosts of the Union, to save our liberties, vindicate our manhood, and deserve well of our Country. MEN OF COLOR! the Englishman, the Irishman, the Frenchman, the German, the American, have been called to assert their claims to freedom and a manly character, by an appeal to the sword. The day that has seen an ordered race in arms has, in all history, seen their last trial. We now see that our last opportunity has come. If we are not better in the scale of humanity than Englishmen, Irishmen, White Americans and other Races, we can show it now. Men of Color, Brothers and Fathers, we appeal to you, by all your concerns for yourselves and your liberties, by all your regard for God and humanity, by all your desire for Citizenship and Equality before the law, by all your love for the Country, to step at an altar, listen to nothing that shall deter you from rallying for the Army. Come Forward, and at once Enroll your Names for the Three Years' Service. Strike now, and you are henceforth and forever Freemen!

| | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| E. D. Bassett, | Rev. J. Underdue, | P. J. Armstrong, | Rev. J. C. Gibbs, | Elijah J. Davis, |
| William B. Forten, | John W. Price, | J. W. Simpson, | Daniel George, | John P. Burr, |
| Frederick Douglass, | Augustus Dorsey, | Rev. J. R. Trusty, | Robert M. Adger, | Robert Jones, |
| Wm. Whipper, | Rev. Stephen Smith, | S. Morgan Smith, | Henry M. Cropper, | O. V. Catto, |
| D. D. Turner, | N. W. Depee, | William E. Gipson, | Rev. J. B. Heeve, | Thos. J. Dorsey, |
| Jas. McCrummell, | Dr. J. B. Wilson, | Rev. J. Boulden, | Rev. J. A. Williams, | I. D. CHE, |
| A. S. Cassey, | J. W. Cassey, | Rev. J. Asher, | Rev. A. L. Stanford, | Jacob C. White, |
| A. M. Green, | James Needham, | Rev. Elisha Weaver, | Thomas J. Bowers, | Morris Hall, |
| J. W. Page, | Ebenezer Black, | David B. Bowser, | J. C. White, Jr., | J. P. Johnson, |
| L. R. Seymour, | James R. Gordon, | Henry Minton, | Rev. J. P. Campbell, | Franklin Turner, |
| Rev. William T. Catto, | Samuel Stewart, | Daniel Colley, | Rev. W. J. Alston, | Jesse E. Glasgow. |

A Meeting in furtherance of the above named object will be held

And will be Addressed by

U. S. Steam-Power Book and Job Printing Establishment, Lodger Buildings, Third and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia.

When the Emancipation Proclamation allowed the enlistment of African American soldiers, black leaders such as Frederick Douglass immediately went to work recruiting men. By the end of the war, 186,000 black soldiers had served in the Union army and another 29,000 in the navy, accounting for nearly ten percent of all Union forces and 68,178 of the Union dead or missing. Sixty percent of all black troops were former slaves. The flight of African Americans from plantations, their eagerness to enlist in the U. S. Army, their willingness to endure atrocities inflicted by Confederate soldiers, and their unflinching belief that the Union would endure helped preserve the Union and shape its reconstruction. (Private Collection)



Any doubts white soldiers had regarding the abilities and courage of black troops were dispelled with the terrible battle at Fort Wagner, South Carolina, on July 18, 1863. The Massachusetts 54th Volunteers, a regiment of African American soldiers, were decimated in the course of the battle, throwing themselves again and again against the entrenched Confederate forces. They lost the battle but proved their courage beyond question. This lithograph, "Storming Fort Wagner," was printed in 1890 to commemorate the heroic Massachusetts 54th. (Gilder Lehman Collection)

“A JUST MAN MUST DO HARD THINGS SOMETIMES,
THAT SHEW HIM TO BE A GREAT MAN”

Hannah Johnson to Abraham Lincoln, July 31, 1863

Shortly after the heroic attack on Fort Wagner by the black troops of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, the mother of one of the surviving soldiers wrote to President Lincoln. Concerned about rumors that the Proclamation might be rescinded, Hannah Johnson told Lincoln: “Don’t do it. . . . When you are dead and in Heaven, in a thousand years that action of yours will make the Angels sing your praises.” She pressed the President to ensure the fair treatment of African Americans fighting for the Union. She did not know that Lincoln had just issued his Order of Retaliation, demanding that the Confederacy treat black prisoners no differently than white.



Buffalo [N.Y.] July 31 1863

Excellent Sir

My good friend says I must write to you and she will send it My son went in the 54th regiment. I am a colored woman and my son was strong and able as any to fight for his country and the colored people have as much to fight for as any. My father was a Slave and escaped from Louisiana before I was born morn forty years ago I have but poor edication but I never went to schol, but I know just as well as any what is right between man and man. Now I know it is right that a colored man should go and fight for his country, and so ought to a white man. I know that a colored man ought to run no greater risques than a white, his pay is no greater his obligation to fight is the same. So why should not our enemies be compelled to treat him the same, Made to do it.

My son fought at Fort Wagoner but thank God he was not taken prisoner, as many were I thought of this thing before I let my boy go but then they said Mr. Lincoln will never let them sell our colored soldiers for slaves, if they do he will get them back quck he will rettallyate and stop it. Now Mr Lincoln dont you think you oght to stop this thing and make them do the same by the colored men they have lived in idleness all their lives on stolen labor and made savages of the colored people, but they now are so furious because they are proving themselves to be men, such as have come away and got some edication. It must not be so. You must put the rebels to work in State prisons to making shoes and things, if they sell our colored soldiers, till they let them all go. And give their wounded the same treatment. it would seem cruel, but their no other way, and a just man must do hard things sometimes, that shew him to be a great man. They tell me some do you will take back the Proclamation, don’t do it. When you are dead and in Heaven, in a thousand years that action of yours will make the Angels sing your praises I know it. Ought one man to own another, law for or not, who made the law, surely the poor slave did not. so it is wicked, and a horrible Outrage, there is no sense in it, because a man has lived by robbing all his life and his father before him, should he complain because the stolen things found on him are taken. Robbing the colored people of their labor is but a small part of the robbery their souls are almost taken, they are made bruited of often. You know all about this

Will you see that the colored men fighting now, are fairly treated. You ought to do this, and do it at once, Not let the thing run along meet it quickly and manfully, and stop this, mean cowardly cruelty. We poor oppressed ones, appeal to you, and ask fair play. Yours for Christs sake Hannah Johnson.

[In another handwriting] Hon. Mr. Lincoln The above speaks for itself Carrie Coburn

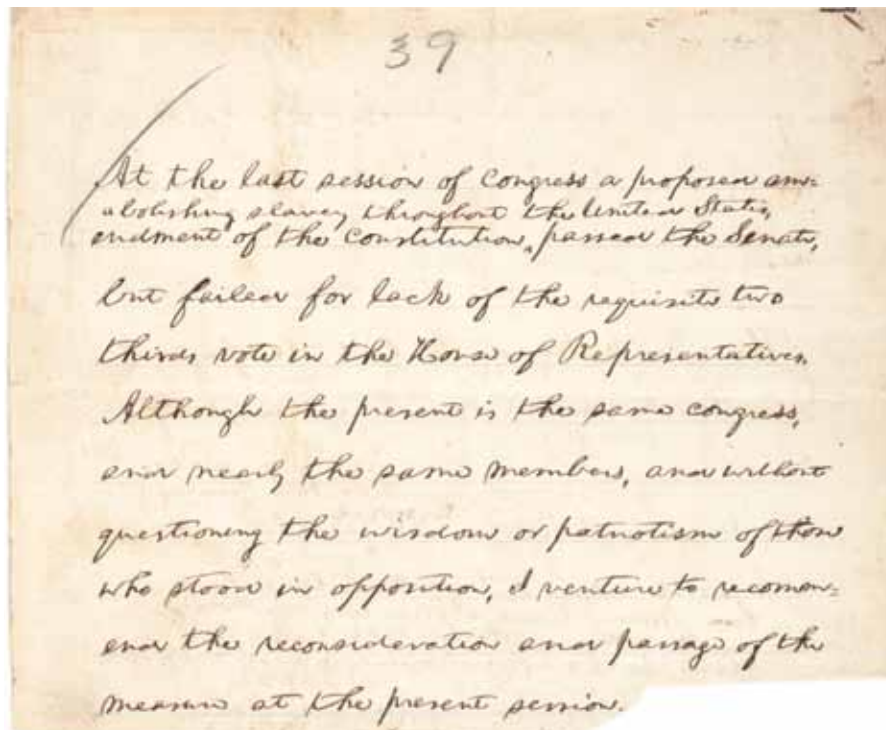


“NEITHER SLAVERY NOR INVOLUNTARY . . . SERVITUDE SHALL EXIST IN THE UNITED STATES”

Abraham Lincoln on the 13th Amendment, December 6, 1864

The Emancipation Proclamation had freed only those slaves in states in rebellion against the United States. As a wartime order, it could subsequently be reversed by presidential decree, congressional legislation, or a court decision. The permanent emancipation of all slaves therefore required a constitutional amendment. In April 1864, the Senate, responding to an abolitionist petition campaign, passed the 13th Amendment ending slavery throughout the United States. However, it failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives.

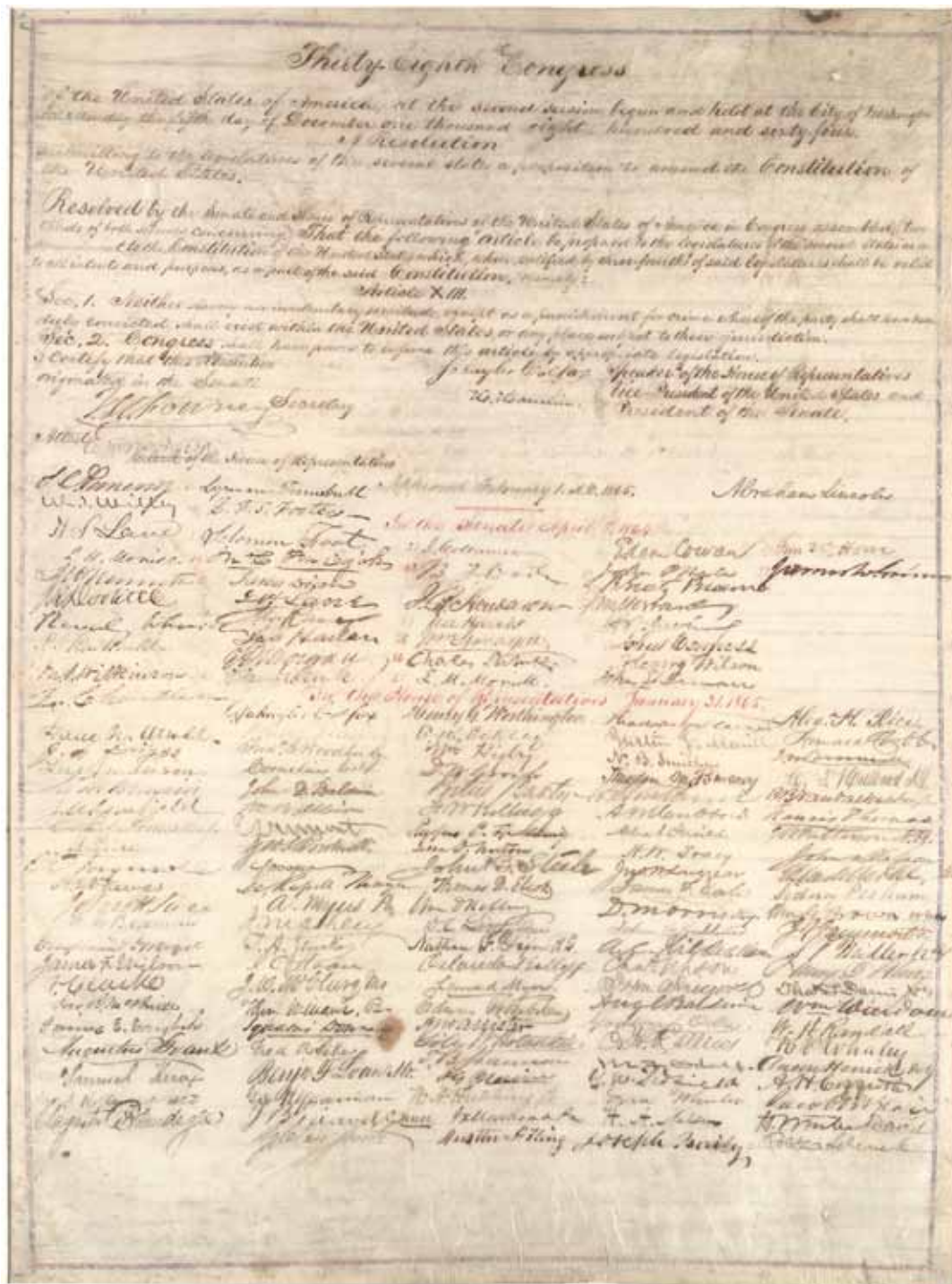
In the last months of the Civil War, Lincoln worked forcefully for its passage, emphasizing his support for the measure in his Annual Message to Congress in December 1864 (see excerpt below in Lincoln's handwriting). He persuaded eight House Democrats to switch their votes and encouraged several other Representatives who had missed the first vote to support the amendment. It finally passed the House on January 31, 1865 and received enough state endorsements to be ratified in December 1865. By signing the amendment, Lincoln placed the authority of his office behind the abolition of slavery throughout the United States.



Notes from Lincoln's last annual message to Congress, December 6, 1864. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

At the last session of Congress a proposed amendment of the Constitution abolishing slavery throughout the United States, passed the Senate, but failed for lack of the requisite two thirds vote in the House of Representatives. Although the present is the same Congress, and nearly the same members, and without questioning the wisdom or patriotism of those who stood in opposition, I venture to recommend the reconsideration and passage of the measure at the present session.





The Thirteenth Amendment, signed by President Lincoln and Congress. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)



THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

Sec. 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United Sates, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Sec. 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



“UNTIL EVERY DROP OF BLOOD DRAWN BY THE LASH SHALL BE PAID BY ANOTHER DRAWN BY THE SWORD”

Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865

In the political turmoil of the times, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was a courageous political statement that transformed the nation's war goals into a fight to end slavery. Many Republicans had justifiable fears that the Proclamation would weaken the party: in the Congressional elections of 1862, the party had lost seats in Congress.

Moreover, it was not inevitable that Lincoln would be elected to a second term in 1864. As late as the summer of 1864, Lincoln himself was convinced that he could be defeated. He was making arrangements to win the freedom of as many Southern slaves as possible and speed up the winning of the war before the next inauguration day, in case he did not win. Military victories for the Union and political maneuvering ensured Lincoln's re-election. His re-election guaranteed that the Emancipation Proclamation would not be rescinded by a Democratic president.

In his second inaugural address, just over 700 words long, Lincoln offered his most profound reflections on the causes and meaning of the war. The “scourge of war,” he explained, was best understood as divine punishment for the sin of slavery, a sin in which all Americans, Northern as well as Southern, were complicit. It describes a national moral debt that had been created “by the bondsmen's 250 years of unrequited toil,” and ends with a call for compassion and reconciliation. At a White House reception after the inauguration, President Lincoln encountered Frederick Douglass.

“I saw you in the crowd today, listening to my inaugural address,” the President remarked. “How did you like it?”

“Mr. Lincoln,” Douglass answered, “that was a sacred effort.”



Frederick Douglass, c. 1870
(Gilder Lehrman Collection)



THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN, DELIVERED AT THE NATIONAL CAPITOL, MARCH 4th, 1865.

Fellow Countrymen :

At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential Office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed very fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented.

The progress of our arms—upon which all else chiefly depends—is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it; all sought to avoid it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide the effects by negotiation.

Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease, even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph and a result less fundamental and astounding.

Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both should not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of these offences—which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came—shall we discern there is any departure from those Divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wound, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

A broadside of Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, undated but printed between March 4 and April 15, 1865, because copies published after Lincoln's assassination were printed and bordered in black. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation: A Timeline

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| 1808 | <i>January</i> | Abolition of the international slave trade by the U.S. and Britain |
| 1809 | <i>February 12</i> | Abraham Lincoln born in Kentucky |
| 1820 | | Missouri Compromise |
| 1850 | | Fugitive Slave Law |
| 1854 | <i>May</i> | Kansas-Nebraska Act |
| | <i>October 16</i> | Lincoln's speech in Peoria, Ill., against the Kansas-Nebraska Act |
| 1857 | <i>March</i> | Dred Scott decision |
| 1858 | <i>Aug.-Oct.</i> | Lincoln-Douglas debates in U.S. Senate campaign in Illinois |
| 1860 | <i>November 6</i> | Lincoln elected 16th President of the United States. |
| | <i>December 20</i> | South Carolina secedes from the Union. |
| 1861 | <i>March 2</i> | Congress passes constitutional amendment forbidding federal government to interfere with "domestic institutions" within any state; never ratified. |
| | <i>March 4</i> | Lincoln inaugurated 16th President of the United States. |
| | <i>April 12</i> | Civil War begins with rebel attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston, S.C., harbor. |
| | <i>August 6</i> | First Confiscation Act passed, freeing slaves used by disloyal citizens in the war effort. |
| | <i>August 30</i> | General Fremont declares slaves of disloyal owners free in Missouri. |
| | <i>September 11</i> | Lincoln orders Gen. Fremont to modify his emancipation decree to conform to U.S. law. |
| | <i>December</i> | Lincoln devises compensated emancipation plan to be introduced in the Delaware. |
| 1862 | <i>March 13</i> | Congress forbids army and navy to return fugitive slaves to disloyal owners. |
| | <i>April 16</i> | Lincoln signs act abolishing slavery in Washington, D.C., with compensation to owners. |
| | <i>May</i> | General David Hunter recruits African American soldiers in the South Carolina Sea Islands but is forced to disband them in the absence of federal support. |
| | <i>June 19</i> | Lincoln signs law barring slavery from the federal territories. |
| | <i>July 12</i> | Lincoln warns border state members of Congress that slavery "will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion—by the mere incidents of the war." |
| | <i>July 17</i> | Second Confiscation Act frees slaves of disloyal citizens. Militia Act provides for the employment of African Americans in the military and grants freedom to those so employed. |
| | <i>July 22</i> | Lincoln submits draft of Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet. |
| | <i>August 22</i> | General Benjamin Butler recruits black troops in New Orleans. |
| | <i>August 25</i> | War Department allows recruitment of black soldiers in the South Carolina Sea Islands. |
| | <i>September 22</i> | Lincoln issues Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. |
| | <i>December 23</i> | The Confederate government orders that captured black Union soldiers are not to be treated as prisoners of war, but turned over to state authorities. |

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| 1863 | <i>January 1</i> | Emancipation Proclamation goes into effect. |
| | <i>May</i> | Bureau of Colored Troops established. |
| | <i>July 18</i> | Massachusetts 54th, a black regiment, defeated in heroic attack on Fort Wagner, S.C. |
| | <i>July 30</i> | Lincoln issues order of retaliation demanding equal treatment for black and white soldiers captured by the Confederacy. |
| 1864 | <i>March</i> | Arkansas ratifies state constitution abolishing slavery. |
| | <i>April 8</i> | U.S. Senate approves 13th Amendment abolishing slavery. |
| | <i>June</i> | Congress authorizes equal pay for black and white soldiers. |
| | <i>September</i> | Louisiana voters ratify state constitution abolishing slavery. |
| | <i>October</i> | Maryland voters ratify state constitution abolishing slavery. |
| | <i>November 8</i> | Lincoln is reelected President. |
| 1865 | <i>January</i> | Missouri state constitutional convention abolishes slavery. General Sherman and Secretary of War Stanton meet with black leaders in Savannah, Ga., to assist newly freed slaves. |
| | <i>January 31</i> | House of Representatives approves 13th Amendment abolishing slavery; Congress sends it to the states for ratification. |
| | <i>February</i> | Tennessee amendment to state constitution abolishes slavery. |
| | <i>March</i> | Congress establishes the Freedman's Bureau to assist newly freed slaves. |
| | <i>March 4</i> | Lincoln's second inauguration |
| | <i>April 9</i> | Gen. Robert E. Lee surrenders to Union General Ulysses S. Grant. |
| | <i>April 11</i> | Lincoln makes his last public speech, which focuses on the problems of reconstruction and plans for black citizenship. |
| | <i>April 14</i> | President Lincoln shot at Ford's Theatre by John Wilkes Booth. |
| | <i>April 15</i> | Abraham Lincoln dies at 7:22 am. |
| | <i>December 6</i> | The 13th Amendment abolishing slavery is ratified. |
| 1866 | <i>April 9</i> | Civil Rights Act passed. |
| 1868 | <i>July 28</i> | 14th Amendment grants citizenship to anyone born in the United States. |
| 1870 | <i>March 30</i> | 15th Amendment guarantees the right to vote regardless "of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." |

Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation: Resources

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- Holzer, Harold and Sara Vaughn Gabbard. *Lincoln and Freedom: Slavery, Emancipation, and the Thirteenth Amendment*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007.
- Landau, Elaine. *The Emancipation Proclamation: Would You Do What Lincoln Did?* Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Elementary, 2008.
- Lehrman, Lewis E. *Lincoln at Peoria: The Turning Point*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2008.
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- Vorenberg, Michael. *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- White, Ronald C., Jr. *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002.

WEB RESOURCES

Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress
memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html

Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln
quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/

Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War
www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/falpg.htm

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
www.gilderlehrman.org

The Lincoln Log
www.thelincolnlog.org

President Lincoln's Cottage at the Soldiers' Home
www.lincolncottage.org



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