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## Abraham Lincoln and the Marathon of Emancipation

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*Abraham Lincoln raising a flag at Independence Hall, Philadelphia, in honor of the admission of Kansas to the Union on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1861, Library of Congress.*

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND THE MARATHON OF EMANCIPATION

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By Elijah Fisher

In 1860, there were roughly 3.95 million slaves in the United States, which made up 12.7% of the entire population.<sup>1</sup> These 3.95 million slaves are one of several reasons, but arguably the most important as to why war erupted between the southern and northern states of America. In 1863, Abraham Lincoln emancipated the slaves, a difficult thing to do normally, but even more difficult considering the circumstances. Lincoln faced the challenge of freeing the slaves, preserving the Union, and protecting the Constitution. Multiple controversies and debates surround the Emancipation Proclamation and Lincoln's true motives, but Lincoln's works and actions show that he was anti-slavery; however, he struggled with emancipation because of Constitutional questions and diplomatic relations.

Abraham Lincoln released the Emancipation Proclamation<sup>2</sup> on January 1, 1863, right in the middle of the American Civil War. Lincoln faced the challenge of navigating a war that split the United States while attempting to free the slaves. Freeing the slaves was challenging because the institution of slavery had existed in North America since the 17th century and had grown to be an integral part of the 18th and 19th century American life. The *Declaration of Independence* states that, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."<sup>3</sup> However, this statement did not apply to African Americans who were slaves in the

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<sup>1</sup> "Data Analysis: African Americans on the Eve of the Civil War," Bowdoin College, accessed November 8, 2019. <https://www.bowdoin.edu/~prael/lesson/tables.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Jefferson, "Declaration of Independence," Avalon Project, Yale Law School. July 4, 1776. [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/declare.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp).

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United States. During the Constitutional Convention, the Founding Fathers realized that no unification of the states was possible unless the South's most valuable institution, slavery, was protected. Lincoln describes this and appeals to the logic of The Framers in a speech he gave in Springfield, Illinois in 1858. He said, "[The Framers] found that by an effort to eradicate [slavery], they might lose so much of what they had already gained... They did what they could and yielded to the necessity for the rest."<sup>4</sup> The Framers saw a need to address slavery. They did so in a few ways, such as allowing Congress to abolish the slave trade as early as 1808 and outlawing slavery in the territories.<sup>5</sup>

The Framers believed that eventually that the changing conditions in the United States would necessitate the ending of slavery and that the U.S. would do so. However, they believed that attempting to force the issue in 1787 would cause serious issues that would threaten the preservation of the Union. Because the Founding Fathers had not laid out an explicit plan to abolish slavery, like they did the slave trade, many pro-slavery congressmen argued that Congress should not abolish slavery because it would violate the original compact assumed by the Founding Fathers.<sup>6</sup> However, by 1800 many state governments, such as Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New York, had passed laws that made owning slaves illegal.<sup>7</sup> The division of slavery between free and slave states only widened as the 19th century progressed. Key decisions such as the Compromise of 1820 and the Compromise of 1850 attempted to solve the issue, but the problem proved unsolvable by any means other than a civil war.

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Danoff, "Lincoln and the "Necessity" of Tolerating Slavery before the Civil War," *The Review of Politics* 77, no. 1 (2015): 53, Jstor.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>6</sup> Dwight L. Dumond, *Anti Slavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1959), 70.

<sup>7</sup> David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University, 2006), 156.

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The American Civil War lasted from 1861 to 1865 and was the bloodiest war in American history, with 750,000 American killed.<sup>8</sup> The Civil War began with the succession of South Carolina from the Union in December of 1860 and the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861.<sup>9</sup> South Carolina's secession came just one month after Abraham Lincoln was elected President. South Carolina's secession was the first among the 11 slave states that seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America. However, not all slave states seceded from the Union. Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland were all slave states that did not secede.

Lincoln, who authored the Emancipation Proclamation, was one of the prominent leaders in the path to emancipation. Lincoln was against slavery as early as his days as a state senator in Illinois. In March of 1837, Lincoln gave a speech to the Illinois General Assembly in which he spoke out against slavery, saying that the institution was founded on injustice and bad policy.<sup>10</sup> This sentiment from Lincoln comes twenty-three years before he was elected President and was not the only time he addressed slavery. Lincoln attacked the institution of slavery again in his speech at Peoria, Illinois, on October 16, 1854. In this speech, he argued that slavery violated all for which the country stood. Lincoln stated, "I hate it because it deprives our republican example of just influence in the world... and especially because it forces so many good men amongst ourselves into open war with the very fundamental principles of civil

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<sup>8</sup> Guy Gugliotta "New Estimate Raises Civil War Death Toll," *New York Times*, April 2, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/03/science/civil-war-toll-up-by-20-percent-in-new-estimate.html>.

<sup>9</sup> "Fort Sumter," American Battlefield Trust, accessed November 2, 2019, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/civil-war/battles/fort-sumter>.

<sup>10</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Protest in Illinois Legislature on Slavery: March 3, 1837," in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* vol. I, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 74-75.

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liberty.”<sup>11</sup> Lincoln hated the institution of slavery for its immorality and for the damage that it did to the fabric of American life and ideas.

Lincoln’s attitude toward slavery led him to argue that something must be done. However, the Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott vs Sandford* (1857) that Congress had no constitutional right to abolish slavery in the territories. Despite that ruling, Lincoln continued to argue against slavery. In a speech he gave in Cincinnati in September of 1859, just one year before his election to the Presidency, he spoke explicitly against the expansion of slavery. He said slavery “should be spread no further in these United States, and I should not object if it should gradually terminate in the whole Union.”<sup>12</sup> Lincoln acted upon his words, and in 1862, Congress passed an act that not only prevented the expansion of slavery, but outlawed slavery in the territories.<sup>13</sup> Essentially, the Republicans in Congress decided that the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Dred Scott vs. Sandford* was wrong and passed the act anyway.<sup>14</sup> The end of slavery in the territories was the first step to emancipating all slaves in the states.

The debate over Lincoln’s views on slavery persists among scholars. Lerone Bennett in his book, *Forced into Glory* (2000), claims that the only reason Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation was because his “half-hearted, soft-on-slavery policy... had created a

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<sup>11</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Peoria, Illinois: October 16, 1854,” in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* vol. II, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 255.

<sup>12</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio: September 17, 1859,” in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* vol. III, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 440.

<sup>13</sup> US Congress, *Freedom of Slaves in Territories*, 37th Congress 2d Session, June 19, 1862.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Finkelman, “The Revolutionary Summer of 1862: How Congress Abolished Slavery and Created a Modern America,” *Prologue Magazine* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2017-18).  
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2017/winter/summer-of-1862>.

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disastrous situation.”<sup>15</sup> Bennett’s claim rests on the fact that Lincoln did not free the slaves all at once the moment he became President, and that on several occasions, Lincoln denied the opportunity to free slaves in certain areas. In May of 1862, General Hunter declared that all slaves in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida would henceforth be free. When Lincoln heard this, he declared Hunter’s order void, meaning those slaves were not free at all. Lincoln was not against the freedom of slaves; however, he did not believe it was the ideal time for emancipation and he felt that only he, as Commander-in-Chief, could constitutionally emancipate the slaves.<sup>16</sup> For emancipation was a tricky task and Lincoln believed attempting to emancipate outside the scope of his powers as Commander-in-Chief would be found unconstitutional.

Another contemporary historian, Thomas DiLorenzo, makes a similar argument as Lerone Bennett, as he disagrees with the popular notion of Lincoln as the “Great Emancipator.” He prefers to call Lincoln “The Great Centralizer” and makes the claim that Lincoln’s primary goal from his time in office was to make himself and the office of the Presidency more powerful, undermining the decentralized government set up by the Founders.<sup>17</sup> DiLorenzo argues that Lincoln could be described as a white supremacist and uses many of his writings and speeches to back his claim. DiLorenzo references Lincoln’s inauguration speech in which Lincoln claims to have no desire to eradicate slavery.<sup>18</sup> He also points to the times when Lincoln was openly supportive of the recolonization of African Americans to Africa after their emancipation.

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<sup>15</sup> Lerone Bennett, *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln’s White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson’s Pub, 2000), 23.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company), 207.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas J. DiLorenzo, “The Great Centralizer: “Abraham Lincoln and the War Between the States, *The Independent Review* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1998), 244..

<sup>18</sup> DiLorenzo, 245-246.



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He summarizes what he believes to be Lincoln's position of slavery as the "opposition to slavery in principle, toleration of it in practice, and a vigorous hostility toward the abolition movement."<sup>19</sup> While DiLorenzo uses Lincoln's own words, his overall assessment of Lincoln's stance on slavery is far from the truth and does not take into account Lincoln's personal growth or his evolving views on slavery and racial equality. The truth about Lincoln can only be seen when one considers all factors and understands the circumstances under which Lincoln was forced to operate, and when one understands this it becomes clear that Lincoln eventually was not only anti-slavery in principle, but also in practice and belief.

Although Lincoln desired to free the slaves he understood the Constitutional restrictions on the Presidency. If Lincoln had just emancipated the slaves, he would have undermined his own constitutional authority and most likely lost public support for the war, and make it more likely that the border states would secede.<sup>20</sup> The topic of emancipation was already a touchy subject, with many Americans and congressmen believing that Lincoln's constitutional authority did not extend to emancipation. They believed that Lincoln's primary task as President was to ensure the preservation of the Union. The Civil War was as much a war to preserve the Union and the Constitution as it was a war to eliminate slavery. It would be wrong to say that the Civil War was either a war on slavery or a war to preserve the union. The Civil War was both. Lincoln understood that it was impossible to preserve the Union and the Constitution if slavery still existed, and therefore he had to fight to eradicate slavery in the United States.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Lincoln saw the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 245.

<sup>20</sup> W.B. Allen, "To Preserve, Protect, and Defend: The Emancipation Proclamation," in *The Political Thought of the Civil War*, ed. Alan Levine, Thomas W. Merrill, and James R. Stoner, Jr. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2018) 250-251.

<sup>21</sup> W. B. Allen, 251.

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secession of the southern states as a violation of the Constitution; therefore, believed it his Constitutional duty - as President - to fight to preserve the Union.<sup>22</sup> Lincoln still had to find a way to free the slaves and abide by the Constitution which gave him no right to do so as the President. However, the Constitution did give him certain powers as Commander-in-Chief. The Confederacy viewed slaves as their property, so they believed the federal government had no right to take them; however, Lincoln saw an opportunity to use this view of the Confederacy to free the slaves.

Lincoln in a letter to James C. Conkling on August 26, 1863, says, "Is there--has there ever been--any question that by law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed?"<sup>23</sup> In times of war, confiscation of the enemy's property was not unusual. Lincoln seized this opportunity to free the slaves and do so under the provision of the Constitution. When Lincoln finally announced the Emancipation Proclamation, he freed the slaves in rebelling states "by the power in [him] vested as Commander-in-Chief."<sup>24</sup> As Commander-in-Chief, Lincoln had the power to make decisions as the supreme military leader of the United States. One such power was the ability to confiscate all the slaves in the states that were actively committing treason against the United States. This power of confiscation was not a power that the President normally had, but one that was granted to him when making a decision as Commander-in-Chief.

Another significant factor that Lincoln had to consider in his goal to emancipate the slaves was the success of the Federal Army in

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<sup>22</sup> Steven G. Calabresi, and Christopher S. Yoo, "Abraham Lincoln," in *The Unitary Executive: Presidential Power from Washington to Bush* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 165-166, Jstor.

<sup>23</sup> John Fabian Witt, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 138.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "The Emancipation Proclamation" Avalon Project, Yale Law School, January 1, 1863. [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/emancipa.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/emancipa.asp).

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relation to the timing of his Emancipation Proclamation. For if Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was to be successful, then it had to have the support of a powerful and winning army behind it. By September of 1862, Lincoln had already drafted the text of the Emancipation Proclamation but was waiting for the right time to announce it. The summer of 1862 was not successful for the Army of the Potomac who suffered defeat after defeat by General Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. In a letter Lincoln writes to a group of Christians in Chicago on September 13, 1862, in which he is responding to their call for emancipation, he says, "Would my word free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution in the rebel States?"<sup>25</sup> Lincoln understood that a premature announcement of his Emancipation Proclamation would render it useless. He understood that he must wait until his army won a significant victory or string of victories against the Confederacy. Just a few days after this letter, the Federal Army did just that when they defeated Lee and the Confederate invasion of the North at the Battle of Antietam.<sup>26</sup> Now Lincoln could announce the Emancipation Proclamation and do so with the force of a winning army behind him, which he did on September 22, 1862.

Lincoln's constitutional and military limits were not the only challenge he faced. Lincoln also faced the challenge of maintaining good relations with the border states and European countries. The border states were states that were in between the Confederacy and the Union. These were the slave states that did not secede from the Union, and consisted of

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<sup>25</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Reply to Emancipation Memorial Presented by Chicago Christians of All Denominations," in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* vol. V, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 420.

<sup>26</sup> "Civil War Timeline," National Parks Service, Accessed April 14, 2021. <https://www.nps.gov/gett/learn/historyculture/civil-war-timeline.htm>.

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Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri.<sup>27</sup> Lincoln knew that to preserve the Union, he must keep the border states from joining the Confederacy. If the border states joined the Confederacy, the Confederacy would gain a large boost to their military. A boost that would propel them over the Federal Army, therefore making it a necessity to keep those states from joining the Confederacy. Keeping the border states rested on one crucial thing, slavery. The border states were in favor of preserving the union but did not want Lincoln to emancipate the slaves. Lincoln understood the importance of appealing to the border states, and so began his emancipation efforts with a gradual and compensated emancipation plan. Lincoln had settled on the opinion that a state-controlled and federally-funded emancipation plan would be the best course of action.<sup>28</sup> He hoped that he could move forward with his plan for emancipation while keeping the border states from leaving the Union. In March of 1862, Lincoln brought a proposition to the representatives of the border states. He offered the border states a plan for gradual compensated emancipation, in which each would be paid \$400 per slave; however, the border states denied his offer.<sup>29</sup> Despite Lincoln's hope for cooperation from the border states, this did not deter Lincoln and Congress from pushing forward on their gradual and compensated emancipation plan. On March 11, 1862, the House approved Lincoln's resolution, with all members of Congress from the border states voting against it.<sup>30</sup> Lincoln took a risk here by pushing forward with his emancipation plan without the support of the border

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<sup>27</sup> Ann Murrell Taylor, "The Border States," National Park Service, Last updated August 14, 2017. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-border-states.htm#>.

<sup>28</sup> William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2011): 162, Jstor.

<sup>29</sup> William E. Gienapp, "Abraham Lincoln and the Border States," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 13 (1992): 33. Jstor.

<sup>30</sup> William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2011): 169, Jstor.

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states, but through this action, it is evident that Lincoln saw it as a moral and constitutional necessity to begin emancipating the slaves. In fact, it was only a few short months until Lincoln proposed the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet in July and announced it in September. Lincoln understood the necessity of appealing to the border states, but also believed it a necessity to begin with his plan for emancipation.

While keeping the border states content was an arduous task, Lincoln also faced the challenge of keeping European countries out of the war. Both Lincoln and the Confederate President Jefferson Davis believed “that diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy would assure its independence.”<sup>31</sup> In 1861, Lincoln blockaded the southern ports, which led Britain and other European countries to proclaim neutrality and define the Confederacy as belligerents, “an act that put the European powers only one step away from extending full recognition of Confederate sovereignty.”<sup>32</sup> This was an extremely precarious situation for Lincoln because he knew that to win the war, Europe must remain neutral. Now Europe’s interest in the war could be put into two categories. The first category was Europe’s economic interest in the United States, specifically their interest and reliance on southern cotton and textiles. Somewhere around 77% of the 800 million pounds of cotton used in Great Britain was produced in the American South.<sup>33</sup> Jefferson Davis understood this and tried to use this factor to get Great Britain to recognize the Confederacy as an independent nation. In fact, many British supported the confederacy and a good many Confederate ships

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<sup>31</sup> Howard Jones, “Wrapping the World in Fire: The Interventionist Crisis in the Civil War.” In *American Civil Wars: The United States, Latin America, Europe, and the Crisis of the 1860’s*, edited by Don H. Doyle, 35, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Jstor.

<sup>32</sup> Howard Jones, 35.

<sup>33</sup> Eugene R. Dattel, “Cotton and the Civil War,” *Mississippi Historical Society*, Accessed January 28, 2021, <http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/291/cotton-and-the-civil-war>.

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were built in a Liverpool shipyard.<sup>34</sup> Despite a national declaration of neutrality, many citizens still chose to support the Confederacy because they suffered economically due to the Confederacy's inability to transport cotton to England.<sup>35</sup> The other category of interest was the war's impact on the abolition of slavery. Great Britain had abolished slavery in its country and its colonies in 1834.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the nation as a whole supported the side of abolition. While Britain may still have been divided on which side of the war to support come the summer of 1862, Lincoln's announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation was a turning point in that discussion. In November of 1862, *The Illustrated London News* issued a statement urging "public sympathy in [England] with the emancipation party in the Federal States of America. The South is charged with having designedly provoked war for the sole purpose of founding a confederacy to perpetuate slavery."<sup>37</sup> Lincoln's announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation was quite important because it solidified the idea that the Civil War was a war against the institution of slavery. While a moral victory in the pursuit of abolition, the Emancipation Proclamation was also a great diplomatic victory for the North as well as helping to preserve Europe's noninvolvement in the Civil War.

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<sup>34</sup> Michigan State University, "British Involvement in the American Civil War" HIST 325- U.S. Foreign Relations to 1914, Accessed January 28, 2021. <http://projects.leadr.msu.edu/usforeignrelations/exhibits/show/british-involvement-in-the-ame>.

<sup>35</sup> Alan Rice, "The American Civil War and European Anti-Slavery," *Revealing Histories*, Accessed January 28, 2021, <http://revealinghistories.org.uk/the-american-civil-war-and-the-lancashire-cotton-famine/articles/the-american-civil-war-and-european-anti-slavery.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Rice, "The American Civil War and European Anti-Slavery."

<sup>37</sup> "The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society," *The Illustrated London News* 41, no. 1175 (November 22, 1862): 543, <http://iln.digitalscholarship.emory.edu/browse/iln41.1175.005/>.

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It would have been difficult enough for Lincoln to tackle these diplomatic challenges if he only had to face one at a time, but Lincoln was not so fortunate. He had the insurmountable task of tackling both of these at the same time. For the first part of the war, Lincoln emphasized the war to preserve the Union. However,

Lincoln's call for preserving the union rang hollow in England and throughout Europe. Most observers had expected him to declare war against slavery, but he could not do so without driving the Border States and Union loyalists in the South into the Confederacy while alienating northerners unwilling to fight for black freedom.<sup>38</sup>

Lincoln faced a double-edged sword of diplomacy. The border states wanted to preserve the Union, but any action against slavery would result in their secession. However, England cared little about the preservation of the union, but a moral war against the institution of slavery is one that they would support. If either of these occurred, Lincoln knew the war would be over and the once proud United States would be split in two. However, through Lincoln's ingenious ability to navigate the labyrinth of obstacles, he was able to appeal to both the border states and England and keep them from supporting the Confederacy. Lincoln managed this through the release of his Emancipation Proclamation. Through this proclamation, he made the war against slavery by freeing the slaves but left the border states out of it by only freeing the slaves in the states rebelling against the Union.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Howard Jones, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Emancipation Proclamation."

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The path to emancipation was filled with challenging tasks and difficult obstacles, but Lincoln overcame these and freed the slaves while preserving the Constitution and the Union. Lincoln overcame the Constitutional restrictions that prohibited him from emancipating slaves and he overcame the diplomatic struggles that threatened the preservation of the Union. Each of these challenges required a unique outlook and solution, which Lincoln was able to provide despite the extenuating circumstances. While Lincoln might not have always been the strongest advocate for abolition and racial equality, he grew throughout his life, and by the time of his death, he was opposed to slavery in principle, in practice, and belief. Lincoln's legacy should be that of a man who strived to preserve his country that was on the brink of collapse and strived to bring freedom to all of its people.



Appendix

Emancipation Proclamation; January 1, 1863

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

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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 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.

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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.