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## The Evolving Emancipator: An Analysis of Abraham Lincoln and the Progression and Development of His Emancipationist Impulse

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THE EVOLVING EMANCIPATOR: AN ANALYSIS OF ABRAHAM  
LINCOLN AND THE PROGRESSION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIS  
EMANCIPATIONIST IMPULSE

by

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University of Central Florida, 2017

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in History  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This research looks at the narrative of Abraham Lincoln as the Great Emancipator versus the Evolving Emancipator. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to the narrative of the Evolving Emancipator and show an imperfect man who achieved this action after trials and tribulations. This has been achieved by examining letters and other primary sources to fully understand the scope of Lincoln's sentiments regarding slavery. My research shows a man who acknowledged slavery because it was sanctioned by the law. He recognized the rights of slave owners, both to retain their slaves and to have fugitive slaves returned, as they were clearly guaranteed in the Constitution.

My thesis aims to accurately represent a man with conflicting thoughts who at the end of the day was sensible about his time, but through extensive pressure finally found his conviction with his prime goal being to unite his nation once more. By providing analyses of primary sources, like his letters to Horace Greeley and his draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, I was able to garner an account of Abraham Lincoln's adaptability to the social, political and economic changes during his presidency and decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

There is no shortage of data on the subject at hand and through primary and secondary sources I was able to collect a copious amount of details for my thesis. The sources used for this study effectively give a well-rounded idea of the era's current events that helped formulate and add to my research.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my mom and my grandmother. Thank you for all of your hard work and patience, I could not have gotten here without you. I appreciate the unconditional support.

*Gracias.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. John Sacher, the head of my thesis committee, for providing all of the necessary tools for the research. Your knowledge and patience were indispensable.

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I am forever indebted to them for sharing their expertise, sincerity and valuable guidance. I could not have completed this thesis without their backing.

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## INTRODUCTION

*“If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide.”*

— Abraham Lincoln, 1838<sup>1</sup>

The narrative of Abraham Lincoln as the Great Emancipator has been studied since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lincoln’s letters and speeches allow scholars to investigate his sentiments toward slavery and the evolution of his thoughts through the years leading up to the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln, a man known as the liberator of the slaves, has shown a different view on emancipation through his writings.

Beginning with his life before the presidency, this thesis analyzes his works to understand Lincoln’s perception of the abolition movement and his views on slavery. I consider the correspondence between Lincoln and his peers as well as actions taken leading up to the

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois,” January 27, 1838, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 1, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 110.



Emancipation Proclamation to support my claim of his evolution to emancipation. Following the Mexican-American War, Lincoln becomes a prominent figure in politics and established a stance on slavery as a proponent of colonization.

So why did Lincoln change his mind? Exploring Lincoln as time progresses, sources show a Lincoln who evolves from hesitant opponent of slavery into an emancipator, pressured by abolitionists and the prospect of military advantage.

This work focuses on Lincoln's political life and choices that led to the Emancipation Proclamation. The next section offers a study on the Lincoln's view of the slavery issue before and leading to his election, where I explore debates and speeches to support my thesis. It is followed by the events leading to Fort Sumter and his reaction, particularly in regards to secession. I conclude with a section detailing acts and steps toward emancipation, investigating his thought process coupled with social pressures.

The common discourse on Lincoln has three main perspectives of his persona as emancipator. Historians who view Lincoln as the Great Emancipator include Allen Guelzo and Louis Masur who argue his intent was to emancipate the slaves from day one. Other historians dispute Lincoln's role as emancipator and support the idea of self-emancipation. Barbara J. Fields presents that slaves emancipated themselves by providing impetus for the Emancipation Proclamation. The final category is where my historical analysis fits into, the Evolving Emancipator. Richard Carwardine describes Lincoln as, "a man still tussling with a fundamental

decision yet to be taken,” just before announcing the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.<sup>2</sup>

Historian Todd Brewster displays Lincoln’s private doubts as well in one of his works, *Lincoln’s Gamble: The Tumultuous Six Months that Gave America the Emancipation Proclamation and Changed the Course of the Civil War*.

With the use of primary and secondary sources, I argue that Lincoln was not a “Great” emancipator who wanted to free the slaves and incorporate them into society like ardent abolitionists, but rather, was slowly led to emancipating the slaves after having tried other measures. The paper concludes with the overall information gathered by my research and discussion of the analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Carwardine, “Whatever Shall Appear to Be God’s Will, I Will Do,” in *Lincoln’s Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered*, eds. William Blair, Karen Fisher Younger, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), pg. 77.

## LINCOLN BEFORE THE PRESIDENCY

When he assumed the presidency in 1861, Abraham Lincoln had no intention of freeing the slaves; then, the Civil War was being fought over restoring the union with slavery on the sidelines. Lincoln's views reflected a systematic approach to the problem through the colonization of blacks. In a eulogy for Henry Clay in 1852, a younger Lincoln displayed sentiments of colonization; migration of free African Americans to Africa.<sup>3</sup> The displacement would see freedmen outside of the United States. The *Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America*, then known commonly known as the *American Colonization Society* (ACS) had been around for a couple of decades with supporters including Thomas Jefferson,

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<sup>3</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Eulogy on Henry Clay," July 6, 1852, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 132.

Henry Clay, James Monroe, and James Madison.<sup>4</sup> The society was based on the removal of free African Americans from the United States. Their belief was free blacks could not benefit from American society and would be prosper under their own leadership in Africa.<sup>5</sup> The society was popular among slave owners in Virginia during the 1820's and 1830's. The ideology represented a compromise on emancipation, one that non-Virginians like Abraham Lincoln promoted. In the case of Lincoln, he typified the anti-slavery part of colonization while other members had more contemptible views; those who preferred colonization as a means of protecting the citizens from the "danger" of newly freed slaves.

Like the society's white supporters, views were divided among blacks. The *American Colonization Society* received some resistance from African Americans like James Forten who in 1817, on behalf of African Americans in Philadelphia, petitioned saying, "We have no wish to separate for any purpose whatsoever" strongly opposing the colonization of blacks in Africa.<sup>6</sup> He eventually went to become part of the abolitionist American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) founded by Arthur Tappan and former member of the ACS William Lloyd Garrison. While the ACS wanted to remove African Americans, the AASS called for immediate abolition of slavery. The clear distinction between colonization and abolition lies within the rights granted. While colonizationists believed slavery was morally wrong, their lack of resolve for integration of blacks in society differs from the abolitionist sentiment to grant rights to freedmen. There was

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<sup>4</sup> "American Colonization Society membership certificate, 1833", The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/slavery-and-anti-slavery/resources/american-colonization-society-membership-certifica>.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher L. Webber, *American to the Backbone: The Life of James W. C. Pennington, the Fugitive Slave Who Became One of the First Black Abolitionists*, (New York: Pegasus Books, 2011), pg. 59.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Tappan, *The Life of Arthur Tappan*, (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870), pg. 135-136.

also an economic difference between the two. While colonization required money to transport freedmen and compensation for slaveowners, abolishing slavery allowed for freedom without economic incentive. With creation of the society, came the broadening perspective of integrating African Americans into society. The society had, in part, added to the fight against slavery that had been part of the national conversation rising during Jacksonian America.

After the era of Jackson, Polk's war against Mexico became of social and political importance to both America and Lincoln. It was during this time that first term congressman Lincoln expressed concern for a failure on the president's part in initiating a conflict that was "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced."<sup>7</sup> The Mexican- American War sparked the topic of territorial rights to slavery. In the 1840's, Polk's war with Mexico thrust the slavery question into national politics. Manifest Destiny gave way to turmoil in the west and strong opinions in the eastern political front. Through acquisition of territory, came the question that plagued a nation: should slavery be extended to the new territories? In 1849 Lincoln, introduced an amendment to a motion issued by John Wentworth of Illinois. Daniel Gott of New York had instructed the committee for the District of Columbia to report a bill prohibiting slavery in the District; which Wentworth moved to table a motion to reconsider the resolution.<sup>8</sup> His demonstration showed his strong disapproval for the expansion of slavery, but at the time, he

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<sup>7</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Speech in United States House of Representatives: The War with Mexico," January 12, 1848, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 1, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 432.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Remarks and Resolution Introduced in United States House of Representatives Concerning Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia" January 10, 1849, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 20.

lacked the conviction necessary and failed to introduce the bill himself citing later on his “little personal influence” on this matter.<sup>9</sup>

In 1854, Lincoln had a simple answer to the slavery question; he argued that opening the gates to a new territory was openly sanctioning slavery, giving it the ability to spread. At this point, Lincoln stood against the expansion of slavery into the new territories. The results of the Mexican- American war would be instrumental in providing the pressure needed to resolve the question of slavery, which Lincoln would boldly answer during the Civil War.

### **The Kansas-Nebraska Act**

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 had created the two territories with the possibility of using them for a transcontinental railroad. Drafted by the Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the act included a popular sovereignty clause allowing voters to decide whether slavery would be implemented in the territories. While the intention was to have democratic elections, one must remember the eligible voters were exclusively white males and only a few of those had registered to vote, as Lincoln later noted during a speech in Springfield, where he argued the “partial execution” of popular sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> The Kansas-Nebraska Act was viewed by the northerners as an act of aggression towards free-states because it repealed the Missouri

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<sup>9</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Remarks and Resolution Introduced in United States House of Representatives Concerning Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia” January 10, 1849, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 20; James Quay Howard, “To Hon. John T. Stuart,” January 29, 1849, Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center (Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois) The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, Series. 1, ([http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(d0297401\)\)#188](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field(DOCID+@lit(d0297401))#188)).

<sup>10</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Springfield, Illinois,” June 26, 1857, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 399.

Compromise. Opponents of Douglas called the bill a “gross violation of a sacred pledge ... as part and parcel of an atrocious plot.”<sup>11</sup> This time Lincoln displayed a strong opposition, citing the importance of maintaining a Republican example for the rest of the world and the criticism that would come to the Declaration of Independence due to the hypocrisy of enslavement in a free nation.<sup>12</sup> This same argument would be used later on his life. Citing the Missouri Compromise and its opposition to slavery north of the 36’30” during his speech at Springfield, he stated the government’s collapse of that restriction, “is practically legislating for slavery, recognizing it, endorsing it, propagating it, extending it.”<sup>13</sup> His ethical appeal against slavery was constantly overshadowed by his inability to enact resolutions towards the matter. Lincoln politically opposed slavery’s expansion. Nevertheless, this stance did not equate to abolitionism. While this may have been a tactic for political survival, it demonstrates a different but evolving version of the “Great Emancipator” the world knows. One of the only positive things to emerge from the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was it encouraged Lincoln’s renewed interest in politics, as he noted to his good friend Jesse W. Fell, the man who would encourage him to challenge Stephen A. Douglas in their now famous debates.<sup>14</sup>

As Lincoln reacquainted himself with the political scene, his thoughts against slavery became more ardent. In a letter to his friend and slave owner Joshua Speed, he admonishes the

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<sup>11</sup> Roy F. Nichols, "The Kansas-Nebraska Act: A Century of Historiography," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43, no. 2 (1956), pg. 188.

<sup>12</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Peoria, Illinois,” October 16, 1854, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 255.

<sup>13</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Springfield, Illinois,” October 4, 1854, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 242.

<sup>14</sup> Abraham Lincoln “To Jesse W. Fell, Enclosing Autobiography,” *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 512; Walter B. Stevens, *A Reporter’s Lincoln*, ed. Michael Burlingame (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1998) pg. 64-65.

mentality of those who are governed by political figures, referring to them as “completely your masters, as you are the master of your own negroes.” Although he makes the comparison, he again shows signs of restraint as he acknowledges his position as nothing more than preventing the extension of slavery.<sup>15</sup> His return to politics helped the development of the Republican party. The Kansas-Nebraska Act brought about a division in the Whig party between those who approved slavery in the new territories and those who did not. After the demise of the Whig party, the Republican party emerged, composed of the anti-slavery faction of the former Whigs, Free Soilers, anti-slavery Democrats, as well as members of the Liberty party. Lincoln, resisted early recruitment into the party out of fear that it might become a platform for radical abolitionists.<sup>16</sup> Open conflicts in Bleeding Kansas like the Sacking of Lawrence, the Wakarusa War, the Pottawatomie massacre, along with the Sumner-Brooks affair strengthened the Northerners’ opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and popular sovereignty. With the potential of Illinois being affected and out of fear that slavery might be spread to his state, Lincoln abandoned the lifeless Whig party in exchange for the Republican party.

Historian Eric Foner argues that Lincoln was a moderate Republican who opposed slavery chiefly due its violation of republican principles, using the Declaration of Independence’s expression of equality as his main argument. Foner looks at different perceptions of slavery. He analyzes the abolitionists and Radical Republicans view of slavery as a sin, contrasting them to the conservative Republicans that argued the harm that slavery presented to

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<sup>15</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “To Joshua F. Speed,” August 24, 1855, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 322.

<sup>16</sup> Ronald C. White Jr., *A. Lincoln: A Biography*, (New York : Random House, 2009), pg. 203-204.



whites and how it blocked their progress.<sup>17</sup> With the 1856 elections approaching, the Illinois Republican Party used the Bloomington Convention to establish themselves.<sup>18</sup> It was during this convention that the party established its position to admit Kansas as a free state and declared that Congress had the right to outlaw slavery in the territories. During the convention, Lincoln confirmed his support of the party platform and demanded the preservation of the Union; it would remain his priority.<sup>19</sup> Although he lost the Republican Party Vice Presidential nomination for the 1856 presidential election, the convention allowed Lincoln to become the leading Republican in his state.

### **Rising Tensions**

The political atmosphere during this time was heated with the question of slavery in the new territories. The rising tensions were exasperated with the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case in 1857. Dred Scott was a slave who sued for his and his family's freedom as they had been taken by his owners to territories where slavery was illegal. Chief Justice Roger Taney's decision in the case led to public outrage he declared

the provisions of the Act of 1820, commonly called the Missouri Compromise, in so far as it undertook to exclude negro slavery from, and communicate freedom and citizenship to, negroes in the northern part of the Louisiana cession, was a Legislative act exceeding the powers of Congress, and void, and of no legal effect to that end.

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<sup>17</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010) pg. 84-88.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Selby, "The Editorial Convention of 1856," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* vol. 5 no. 3 (1912): pg. 344.

<sup>19</sup> White Jr., *A. Lincoln*, pg. 216-221.

In voiding the compromise and making slavery legal in all territories, he deepened sectional tension.<sup>20</sup> Lincoln's response to the case foreshadowed his priorities as president. He maintained the importance of blacks being able to maintain the same freedoms as whites while endorsing colonization adding, "I have said that the separation of the races is the only perfect preventive of amalgamation."<sup>21</sup> During this very same speech in Springfield on June of that year, Lincoln alluded to sending the freed and former slaves to Kansas.<sup>22</sup>

Chief Justice Taney's decision in the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case was meaningful in determining America's identity. Taney's decision to ignore the Missouri Compromise of 1820 essentially made the United States a slave nation from sea to shining sea. It contemplated what the Union was to become: a free or unfree nation.

### **The Senatorial Elections of 1858**

The elections in 1858 provided the perfect opportunity for Abraham Lincoln to once again rise to the political podium by running against the incumbent Senator Stephen A. Douglas. After winning the party's Senate nomination, Lincoln gave his famous "A House Divided" speech using the slavery rhetoric in his favor to denounce the separation of the Union due to a prominent issue, "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half

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<sup>20</sup> "Decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott Case," *The New York Daily Times*, March 7, 1857, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0306.html#article>.

<sup>21</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Speech at Springfield, Illinois," June 26, 1857, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 409.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

*free.... [I]t will become all one thing, or all the other.*"<sup>23</sup> Lincoln hinted at Douglas conspiring to nationalize slavery and showed fear in Illinois becoming a slave state by orders of the Supreme Court. The speech argued the dangers of disunion and mustered Republicans in the North.<sup>24</sup>

The Senate campaign began soon afterward with the famous Lincoln-Douglas series of debates. At this time, Lincoln was still a moderate Republican whose anti-slavery views did not stretch out further than colonization and stopping slavery's expansion. Lincoln believed slavery was morally incorrect yet changing a socially construed idea through political principle, like abolitionism and readjusting to society, was too problematic and unstable to entertain the idea.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates provide perhaps the most insight into Lincoln's pre-Civil War sentiments on emancipation. There is no doubt the "Great Emancipator" was anti-slavery, but what comes into question is his sentiments on abolitionism and how they evolved into the final Emancipation Proclamation. The Lincoln-Douglas Debates were a series of debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas. Lincoln was the Republican candidate in pursuit of the incumbent Democratic Senator Douglas' seat.

The seven debates took place across the state of Illinois starting with Ottawa on August 21, Freeport on August 27, Jonesboro on September 15, Charleston on September 18, Galesburg on October 7, Quincy on October 13, and Alton on October 15. In the series of debates the main theme was the spread of slavery in the territories. Lincoln had previously shown an attitude

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<sup>23</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "A House Divided," June 16, 1858, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 2, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 462-469.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 467.

denouncing Douglas' involvement in the Kansas- Nebraska Act and his repeal of the Missouri Compromise.

During the debates, Douglas openly accused Lincoln of assembling a group of Congressmen with the intent to abolish slavery, calling them members of the "Black Republicans" party.<sup>25</sup> Douglas also reproached Lincoln for disagreeing with the *Dred Scott* decision because "it deprives the negro of the rights and privileges of citizenship."<sup>26</sup> Lincoln retorted with the threat of "the next Dred Scott decision" leading to the nationalization of slavery.<sup>27</sup> Lincoln defended the right to their liberty with apprehension to all citizenship rights.<sup>28</sup>

The next debate began with Lincoln's answers to Douglas' inquiries. When asked if he stood in favor of the unconditional repeal of the fugitive slave laws, he replied against it. When asked if he stood pledged to the prohibition of the slave trade between the different states, he opposed its prohibition. The question that best displayed his intentions in preserving the country over anything else came when asked if he would opposed acquisition of new territory unless slavery is first banned there, to which he responded, "I am not generally opposed to honest acquisition of territory; and, in any given case, I would or would not oppose such acquisition, accordingly as I might think such acquisition would or would not aggravate the slavery question among ourselves."<sup>29</sup> His intent was to convey that above all, his goal was preservation of the

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<sup>25</sup> Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, "First Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois" August 21, 1858, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pg. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pg. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.,pg. 9, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, "Second Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Freeport, Illinois," August 27, 1858, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 41.

union. The acquisition of the territories had thrust the question of slavery into American politics, which caused a frenzy amongst politicians. While Lincoln was not opposed to the acquisition of territory, his response presents his concern for the effect on the people, chiefly white men. He knew that aggravating the question of slavery would prompt restlessness amongst the states and jeopardize the nation.

In the third debate, in Jonesboro, Douglas jabbed at Lincoln's fellow Republicans, this time Elihu Washburne who was accused of making speeches declaring that admission should be denied to slave states.<sup>30</sup> Even Douglas pointed out Lincoln's inconsistent thoughts on racial equality. Douglas mentioned white sentiments displayed by Lincoln and the Republican Party that contrasted with words spoken by them in other parts of the state stating,

Down here he denies that the Black Republican party is opposed to the admission of any more slave States, under any circumstances, and says that they are willing to allow the people of each State when it wants to come into the Union, to do just as it pleases on the question of slavery. In the North, you find Lovejoy, their candidate for Congress in the Bloomington district, Farnsworth, their candidate in the Chicago district, and Washburne, their candidate in the Galena district, all declaring that never will they consent, under any circumstances, to admit another slave State, even if the people want it. Thus, while they avow one set of principles up there, they avow another and entirely different set down here. And here let me recall to Mr. Lincoln the scriptural quotation which he has applied to the federal government, that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and ask him how does he expect this Abolition party to stand when in one-half of the State it advocates a set of principles which it has repudiated in the other half.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, "Third Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Jonesboro, Illinois," September 15, 1858, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 141.

<sup>31</sup> Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, "Fourth Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Charleston, Illinois," September 15, 1858, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 177.

The following day Lincoln penned Washburne, concerning the allegations, as he did not believe they shared the same views.<sup>32</sup> He asked him to burn the letter if the allegations were true, to which Mr. Washburne never replied through correspondence on the matter again.

The debates showed Lincoln alienating himself from abolition, wanting instead to promote liberty not a reform for what considered an immoral situation. While he seemed to believe the slavery question needed a resolution in order to keep a united front, at the time he did not suggest or envision the idea of complete equality amongst all men. Frederick Douglass observed Lincoln's "entire freedom from popular prejudice against the colored race."<sup>33</sup> Lincoln's anti-slavery views demonstrated his strife to constrict the expansion of slavery but had little thought over the status of free African Americans. Although he lost the senate seat to Douglas, the debates elevated Lincoln's political profile, leading him to receive the Republican party nomination for the 1860 presidential election.

## **Harpers Ferry**

On October 16, 1859, radical abolitionist John Brown attempted to spark a slave rebellion by raiding Harpers Ferry, Virginia. With Brown's execution for treason against the state, Lincoln addressed the government's duty to punish any type of treason, "... therefore you undertake to destroy the Union, it will be our duty to deal with you as old John Brown has been

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<sup>32</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To Elihu B. Washburne " September 16, 1858, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 145.

<sup>33</sup> David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), pg. 221.

dealt with.”<sup>34</sup> Having sparked more tension with his death than while alive, Brown became a martyr in the eyes of Northerners while escalating thoughts of secession in the South. Lincoln, like other Republicans, was forced to ease the minds of Southerners to maintain the Union. John Brown presented a problem for Republicans as radicalism was feared by the people. John Brown showed the extent of damage that Radical Republicans could bring about, forcing Lincoln to denounce radicalism as acceptable in nation. His reaction to John Brown and the incident at Harpers Ferry, again demonstrated Lincoln’s focus on preservation of the Union above all.

### **Cooper Union Address**

After his defeat in the senatorial race in Illinois, Lincoln began building support for his presidential candidacy in the upcoming 1860 presidential election. In his speech at Cooper Union, New York, Lincoln elaborated on his opposing view of the expansion of slavery into the territories but denounced the abolition of slavery.<sup>35</sup> The speech has been regarded as one of the most important in Lincoln’s life by some historians who argue that it helped him win the presidency. The speech helped cement Lincoln’s suitability for the presidency and allowed him to disprove thoughts of radicalism, relieving conservative minds.<sup>36</sup> In his speech at Cooper Union, Lincoln took on Republican Senator William Henry Seward of New York, the leading

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<sup>34</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Leavenworth, Kansas,” December 3, 1859, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 503.

<sup>35</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Address at Cooper Institute, New York City” February 27, 1860, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 524-537; Abraham Lincoln, “Speech at Manchester, New Hampshire” March 1, 1860, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 552.

<sup>36</sup> Harold Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union: The Speech that Made Abraham Lincoln President*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), pg. 1.

Republican candidate for the presidency, and appealed to the eastern elites to gain the Republican nomination. Once Lincoln gained the nomination in May of 1860, Seward campaigned for him becoming Secretary of State once Lincoln was elected.

## **Republican Party**

The party's platform for the elections focused on opposition to slavery in the territories assuring there would not be interference to slavery in the states. The platform did not mention the Fugitive Slave Act but did allude to the Dred Scott decision calling the judicial action "political heresy."<sup>37</sup> The abolitionist faction of the party was indignant of a moderate's nomination for the presidency.

The platform favored tariffs that protected Northern industry, a Homestead Act which granted free farmland to settlers out West, the establishment of a transcontinental railroad and above all, to stop the spread of slavery to the Western territories.<sup>38</sup> It vouched for the preservation of Republican institutions including the importance of states' rights and the balance of power.

In it, the Republicans denounced the spread of slavery, calling it "dangerous political heresy" as well as condemning the slave-trade within the nation.<sup>39</sup> It exalted freedom and denied the authority of the congress to give legal existence to slavery in the United States.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "Republican National Platform, 1860," (Chicago: Press & Tribune Office, 1860), from Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum, [http://cprh.org/Museum/Ephemera/Republican\\_Platform\\_1860.html](http://cprh.org/Museum/Ephemera/Republican_Platform_1860.html) (accessed September 2, 2017).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



## **The Presidential Elections of 1860**

The 1860 Presidential election was agitated by divisions within the Democratic party. Lincoln, the Republican Party nominee, was joined by three other candidates: John C. Breckinridge of the Southern Democrats, Stephen Douglas of the Northern Democrats, and John Bell of the Constitutional Unionists. His running mate and vice-presidential nominee for the Republican Party was Senator Hannibal Hamlin of Maine. The election was fueled with the sectionalism that would descend the country into a civil war. During his campaign, Lincoln carried out a hands-off approach, being the only candidate to not give a speech, relying on the Republican Party to produce support. Lincoln won the Electoral College with 180 votes despite gaining less than 40 percent of the nation's popular vote.<sup>41</sup> Lincoln did not win a single slave state, instead taking states above the Mason–Dixon line and north of the Ohio River. He also gained the Electoral College votes from the western states of California and Oregon. On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th president of the United States. With secessionist sentiments rising, Lincoln was faced with a divided nation before his presidency had even begun.

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<sup>41</sup> "Election of 1860," National Archives and Records Administration, *Electoral College Box Scores 1789-1996*, <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/scores.html#1860>.

## ELECTION - FORT SUMTER

The election of Abraham Lincoln heightened insecurities among southerners who felt their rights disappearing. The institution of slavery was fundamental to southern economy, as cotton was “King”. Lincoln was seen as a threat to southerners who believed he would rid the nation of slavery. This uncertainty led to the South Carolina General Assembly passing the “Resolution to Call the Election of Abraham Lincoln as U.S. President a Hostile Act” on November 9, 1860, where they also announced plans for secession and asked other slave-holding states to join them.<sup>42</sup> By November 20th, five states had called for conventions to discuss secession. As tensions rose, conflicting opinions circulated across the nation. President Buchanan criticized Northern interference with the slave policies of the South but also compared secession

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<sup>42</sup> “Resolution to Call the Election of Abraham Lincoln as U.S. President a Hostile Act and to Communicate to Other Southern States South Carolina’s Desire to Secede from the Union,” November 9, 1860, *Resolutions of the General Assembly, 1779-1879*, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

to a revolution.<sup>43</sup> In December of 1860, the House of Representatives appointed a Committee of Thirty-Three; its goal to reach a compromise to avoid disunion. Lincoln received a letter from his friend Elihu B. Washburne who feared that President Buchanan would let Charleston forts go by not sending a defending force, while expressing his belief that Republicans should stay out of the debate in Congress and that notably the Committee of Thirty-three appointed by the U.S. House of Representatives would do little good to the perilous situation at hand.<sup>44</sup> Lincoln's reply asked Washburne to keep Republicans from welcoming any ideas for a compromise that would allow the extension of slavery. He claimed, "whether it be a Mo. line, or Eli Thayer's Pop. Sov. it is all the same. Let either be done, & immediately filibustering and extending slavery recommences."<sup>45</sup>

Lincoln's wish to end slavery was never greater than his devotion to the prevention of disunion. In a private letter to Georgia Senator Alexander Stephens he shows his priority of maintaining peace with the South stating that they had nothing to fear as the Republican administration would not interfere in the practice of slavery in the states where it existed. He added the only consequential difference between them was, "think[ing] slavery is *right* and ought to be extended; while we think it is *wrong* and ought to be restricted." a sentiment that would continue into the war, as he tried to prove that it was not a war to end slavery.<sup>46</sup> Stephens,

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<sup>43</sup> James Buchanan, "Fourth Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," December 3, 1860.

<sup>44</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To Elihu B. Washburne," December 13, 1860, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 152.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pg. 151.

<sup>46</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To Alexander H. Stephens," December 22, 1860, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 161; Abraham Lincoln, "To John D. Defrees," December 18, 1860, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 156.

who would become the Vice President of the Confederate States agreed saying, “we both have an earnest desire to preserve and maintain the Union.”<sup>47</sup> Days later, South Carolina’s Governor Francis W. Pickens declared secession in effect followed by an address made to slaveholding states inciting them to secede. They claimed the government had become a consolidated Democracy and explained their cause similar to that of the rebels who gained America’s independence from Britain.<sup>48</sup>

### Secession Crisis

South Carolina’s Francis W. Pickens wrote to President Buchanan on December 17, 1860, asking him surrender Fort Sumter with the use of a small force arguing the safety of South Carolina.<sup>49</sup> In a letter he wrote the next day, Buchanan did not address the surrender of Fort Sumter presuming South Carolina was still considering the prospect of secession and offered to send diplomat Caleb Cushing to South Carolina to act as a negotiator on his behalf.<sup>50</sup> Further attempts at claiming Fort Sumter had been ignored by Buchanan causing the first shots of the war as cadets from The Citadel, a military college in Charleston, prevented a steamer from

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<sup>47</sup> Alexander H. Stephens, *Recollections of Alexander H. Stephens*, ed. Marta Lockett Avary, (New York : Doubleday, Page & Company, 1910), pg. 60.

<sup>48</sup> “The Address of the People of South Carolina Assembled in Convention to the People of the Slaveholding States of the United States,” December 1860, (Charleston: Charleston, Evans & Cogswell, Printers to the Convention, 1860) pg. 5.

<sup>49</sup> James Buchanan, *The Works of James Buchanan: Comprising His Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1911), pg. 68; W.A. Harris, *The record of Fort Sumter, from its occupation by Major Anderson, to its reduction by South Carolina troops during the administration of Governor Pickens*, (Columbia: South Carolinian Steam Job Printing Company, 1862), pg. 7; Francis W. Pickens, “To President James Buchanan” December 17, 1860, S511001, *Governor Francis W. Pickens Papers*, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, (Columbia, South Carolina), <http://www.teachingushistory.org/pdfs/BuchananTranscript.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Buchanan, *The Works*, pg. 68.

resupplying Major Robert Anderson's garrison at the fort. Lincoln would condemn this event as one of the reasons of the start of the war claiming, "The insurgents commenced it by firing upon the Star of the West, and on Fort Sumter, and by other similar acts. It is true, however, that the administration accepted the war thus commenced, for the sole avowed object of preserving our Union."<sup>51</sup>

Efforts had already been made to address the grievances of the southern states who were contemplating secession. Senator John J. Crittenden's compromise offers a valuable illustration of the complicated political perspective during that time. Presented on December 18th and tabled by congress on December 31st, his attempt at finding a longstanding solution to the slavery crisis involved the return of the Missouri compromise in which he hoped to restore the feeble peace conceived by the geographical contrast between slavery and freedom.<sup>52</sup> The compromise was not well received by Lincoln who argued that it went against the party's platform; to end the expansion of slavery. After rejection from the House of Representatives and the Senate, it was proposed again during the Peace Conference on February 4, 1861. After weeks of deliberating, the conference proposed a constitutional amendment that failed to prevent the expansion of slavery into new territories, displeasing Republicans.

Lincoln's strong opposition to disunion impaired his ability to favor the abolition of slavery. As he struggled with disunion, he placed importance on the country staying together,

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<sup>51</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To Isaac M. Schermerhorn," September. 12, 1864, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 8, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 2.

<sup>52</sup> John J. Crittenden, "Amendments Proposed in Congress" December 18, 1860, Yale University, *Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, (2008), accessed September 4, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/critten.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/critten.asp); "The Crittenden Compromise.," The New York Times, February 05, 1861, accessed September 4, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1861/02/06/news/the-crittenden-compromise.html?pagewanted=all>.

which effectively kept the war against slavery parallel to the national issue of secession. He maintained no qualms over the Fugitive Slave Acts, or the slave trade among the states, insouciant unless it involved their further extension.<sup>53</sup> Conversations of peaceful arrangements to prevent the war were made by Lincoln in order to prevent bloodshed, using the argument of the colonies against the sentiments of secession. During his speech at Independence Hall on February 22, 1861, Lincoln used the colonies revolt for liberty, the same freedom that should be given equally to all men. He cited the Declaration of Independence as the main principle that should be used to save the country. Lincoln, in February of 1861, was fighting for any type of compromise to preserve the Union.<sup>54</sup>

### **Corwin Amendment and Lincoln's Inauguration**

With the failure of the proposed constitutional amendment by the conference convened in February, Representative Thomas Corwin of Ohio proposed his own resolution. The Corwin Amendment states:

No amendment shall be made to the Constitution, which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish, or interfere within any State, with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said State.<sup>55</sup>

Lincoln used his inaugural address to speak on the matter responding,

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<sup>53</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To William H. Seward," February 1, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 8, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 183.

<sup>54</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Speech in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania" February 22, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 8, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 183.

<sup>55</sup> John A. Lupton, "Abraham Lincoln and the Corwin Amendment," *Illinois Heritage*, vol. 9, no. 5, (September-October, 2006), pg. 34.

I understand a proposed amendment to the Constitution—which amendment, however, I have not seen—has passed Congress, to the effect that the Federal Government shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the States, including that of persons held to service ... holding such a provision to now be implied constitutional law, I have no objection to its being made express and irrevocable.<sup>56</sup>

Lincoln's inauguration speech was charged with remarks on secession. In his speech, Lincoln explained the importance of balancing majority rule with constitutional restraints in order to avoid anarchy.<sup>57</sup> His strong position to enforce his presidential oath to “preserve, protect and defend” led him to plead to his constituents to avoid any conflict. Lincoln's positive reception of the amendment further shows his acceptance of the Constitution's support of slavery, and his duty to uphold the Constitution. With his response to the Corwin Amendment, he also attempted to alleviate any concerns Southerners had about false intentions to abolish slavery in the South. It can be deduced Lincoln used his position on the amendment to try to prevent the border states of Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia from seceding. This proposed 13th amendment's importance and ratification process were interrupted by the war.

### **Fort Sumter**

After his inauguration, Lincoln faced the problem of Fort Sumter. Seeking advice from various cabinet members, he was faced with opinions against supplying the men. A strong proponent of this thought was Secretary of State William H. Seward who believed if Lincoln resupplied Fort Sumter, he would aggravate the situation. He also argued it would push border

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<sup>56</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “First Inaugural Address” March 4, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 271.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pg. 269.

states to secede. Seward went far enough to hint to commissioners on behalf of the Confederacy that Fort Sumter would be ceded.<sup>58</sup> After sending assistant secretary of the Navy Gustavus V. Fox down to Charleston in late March to talk with Major Anderson and Confederates, Lincoln was informed that relief efforts should be made before Anderson ran out of supplies, which was projected to be by April 15th.<sup>59</sup> With knowledge of this, Lincoln informed South Carolina that he would resupply Fort Sumter with provisions as well as reinforcement to Fort Pickens in Florida.<sup>60</sup> On April 12th, the attack that would begin the bloodiest war in America commenced at 4:30 a.m. as Confederates began bombarding Fort Sumter. It was at this moment that Lincoln's true war for the fate of America would begin.

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<sup>58</sup> Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), pg. 261-264.

<sup>59</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To Robert Anderson" April 4, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 322-323.

<sup>60</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To Robert Chew" April 6, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 324.



## **FORT SUMTER – EMANCIPATION**

The attack on Fort Sumter is considered the official start of America's Civil War. Many historians and Americans believe it to be the turning point in American history, and my research has led me to infer that it was the turning point for Lincoln. Historian David Donald remarks,

His repeated efforts to avoid collision in the months between inauguration and the firing on Ft. Sumter showed he adhered to his vow not to be the first to shed fraternal blood. But he also vowed not to surrender the forts. The only resolution of these contradictory positions was for the confederates to fire the first shot; they did just that.<sup>61</sup>

As has been argued, Lincoln had yet to become the "Great" emancipator the world has come to recognize him as. Fort Sumter presented Lincoln with the opportunity to cement his legacy in American history.

The siege lasted from April 12-14th with no casualties during the bombardment. When the attacks prompted President Lincoln to call on seventy-five thousand militiamen to recapture

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<sup>61</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, pg. 293.

the fort and suppress the rebellion, some slave states refused to send their men to fight against neighboring slave states. Fort Sumter became a catalyst for the secession of four border states.

In his proclamation calling for militia and convening congress on the 15th, Lincoln stated:

I deem it proper to say that the first service assigned to the forces hereby called forth will probably be to repossess the forts, places, and property which have been seized from the Union; and in every event, the utmost care will be observed, consistently with the objects aforesaid, to avoid any devastation, any destruction of, or interference with, property, or any disturbance of peaceful citizens in any part of the country.<sup>62</sup>

His language insisted the property as part of the Union, a tactic that Lincoln used in his uncompromising attitude towards any type of secession. The speech addressed the seceded states and the difficulty in suppressing their power as well as convening congress “to consider and determine such measures as, in their wisdom, the public safety and interest may seem to demand” in regards to Fort Sumter.<sup>63</sup> At this time, Lincoln’s made it clear that his priority was the Union and not abolishing slavery; his personal views on slavery stood second to preserving the Union.

The same day, Secretary of War Simon Cameron wrote to the Union governors calling for troops.<sup>64</sup> North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Delaware refused to send troops, citing it as unconstitutional for the president to demand them. Tennessee governor Isham Harris replied to Cameron in a letter suggesting support for secession, “Tennessee will not

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<sup>62</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Proclamation Calling Militia and Convening Congress,” April 15, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 332-333.

<sup>63</sup> Lincoln, “Militia and Convening Congress,” pg. 333.

<sup>64</sup> Simon Cameron, “Call to Arms,” *The Hudson North Star* of April 17, 1861.

furnish a single man for purpose of coercion, but 50,000, if necessary, for the defense of our rights and those of our Southern brethren.”<sup>65</sup>

Lincoln’s call for troops and the blockade of ports in the seceded states provoked secession in four more states within weeks of his proclamation: Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee.<sup>66</sup> Pro-Union state governments did not allow Kentucky or Missouri to secede.

## **Presidential Powers**

Lincoln’s expansion of presidential powers included the aforementioned blockade on shipping ports as well as the suspension of *habeas corpus* on April 27th. The suspension of the writ was restricted to Maryland as Lincoln was warned that anti-war officials would destroy an essential supply line from Annapolis to Philadelphia.<sup>67</sup> He further aggravated tensions when he dismissed Chief Justice Roger Taney’s ruling in the *Ex Parte Merryman* case that challenged Lincoln’s suspension of *habeas corpus* and challenged its constitutionality. Lincoln went forward and called for more than forty thousand men to expand the Army, invoking his right as Commander-in-Chief.<sup>68</sup> As the beginning stages of the war progressed, Lincoln continued to suspend *habeas corpus* in cities like Washington D.C. to highlight this.

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<sup>65</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “To Isham G. Harris,” May [1?] 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 352.

<sup>66</sup> E. B. Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861–1865*, (New York: Doubleday, 1971), pg. 61.

<sup>67</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “To Winfield Scott,” April 27, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 348.

<sup>68</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Proclamation Calling for 42,034 Volunteers,” May 3, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 354-355.

By May 6th, the Confederacy had acknowledged a war between them and the United States, with Britain recognizing them as belligerents. Though she did not recognize the Confederacy as a nation, Queen Victoria stated neutrality would be the course for Britain.<sup>69</sup> The South's strategy for sovereignty was laid on the hope for military intervention by Britain (or France), believing "King Cotton" and trade for would earn that right. In his political analysis of Lincoln's call for troops and his later decision to attack Confederate forces at Manassas Junction, Dr. Paul Poast shows that concerns about British involvement were prevalent within Lincoln's cabinet at the time of Lincoln's decision.<sup>70</sup> He argues that slavery would not have dissuaded Britain from recognizing the Confederacy, as both the North and the South maintained the conflict was about secession and not slavery.<sup>71</sup> The fear of Britain and France recognizing the Confederacy at any point further pushed Lincoln to act on the conflict, holding off on the issue of slavery.

The development of the war increased the need for bipartisan support for success. After the secessions as well as criticism from both Copperheads and Radical Republicans, Lincoln was forced to address abolition. In late May of 1861, Major Gen. Benjamin Butler was compelled to make a decision regarding escaped male slaves that reached Union lines in Fort Monroe. The result was to name them as "contrabands" and allowed the slaves to be considered Union property without being returned to enslavement. Marking a sudden shift in the war, the

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<sup>69</sup> Long, *Day by Day*, pg. 70-71.

<sup>70</sup> Paul Poast, "Lincoln's Gamble: European Recognition and the Onset of the American Civil War," *Security Studies* vol. 24, no. 3 (2015): pg. 503. [https://thepearsoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/22.%20Poast\\_Lincoln%27s%20gamble.pdf](https://thepearsoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/22.%20Poast_Lincoln%27s%20gamble.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> Paul Poast, "Lincoln's Gamble: European Recognition and the Onset of the American Civil War," *Security Studies* vol. 24, no. 3 (2015): pg. 517.

“contraband” stance suddenly created a new possibility for African Americans in the United States. It did not go unnoticed by Lincoln who signed the Confiscation Act of 1861, authorizing the federal government to seize property being used to support the rebellion, including slaves.<sup>72</sup> This effort was a tentative precedent for the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, as it supported the ceasing of slavery in the Confederacy. Although this, the act did not clarify whether the slaves were free. The ambiguity resulted in “free” slaves becoming property in the care of the U.S. government.<sup>73</sup>

Anti-slavery sentiments raced through the ranks as General John C. Frémont proclaimed martial law in Missouri and freed the slaves of those aiding the Confederacy. Lincoln, believing that Frémont’s emancipation was fueled by political intent rather than military necessity, questioning its legality and overruled the emancipation.<sup>74</sup> His stern action prompted an increase in enlistment from Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland. He received backlash from Radical Republicans who saw his decision making as feeble. Maine Senator William P. Fessenden called Lincoln’s position, “a weak and unjustifiable concession to the Union men of the border states.”<sup>75</sup>

Following Confederate victories at Manassas Junction and Wilson’s Creek as well as the resignation of Winfield Scott as the Union’s leading general, Lincoln appointed General George B. McClellan as his new Commanding General in November. The new general showed contempt

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<sup>72</sup> U.S. Senate, “Landmark Legislation: The Confiscation Acts of 1861 and 1862,” <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/ConfiscationActs.htm>.

<sup>73</sup> James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988), pg. 356.

<sup>74</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “To John C. Fremont,” September 2 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 4, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 507.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen B. Oates, “The Slaves Freed,” *American Heritage*, vol. 32, iss. 1, (December 1980), accessed August 15, 2017. <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/slaves-freed>.

for the president, never trusting his actions. McClellan was a Democrat who believed the institution of slavery was constitutionally protected, instructing his commanders in Virginia to “See that the rights and property of the people are respected and repress all attempts at negro insurrection.”<sup>76</sup>

Radical Republicans, with the rest of the Union, were frustrated with Lincoln about the past outcomes in battle. Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner remarked, “overthrow of slavery will make an end of the war,” in order to bring the real issue about instead of masking it.<sup>77</sup> During his annual speech to congress on December 3rd, Lincoln cautioned against open action to end slavery thinking it could spiral and “degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle.” Lincoln believed this could affect the border states and drive them to join the Confederacy.<sup>78</sup>

### **Steps Toward Emancipation**

The second year of the war demanded an increase in troops, one that African Americans could provide. Lincoln’s dynamic with African Americans changed as he realized the power of having them on the Union’s side. African Americans knew the power they held in numbers, but Lincoln remained hesitant of the hostilities that would rise if emancipation was granted.

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<sup>76</sup> George B. McClellan, “Letter to Col. B.F. Kelley,” May 26, 1861, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series II, vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), pg. 754.

<sup>77</sup> Charles Sumner, *Charles Sumner: Memoir and Eulogies. A Sketch of His Life*, ed. William M. Cornell, (Boston: James H. Earle, 1874), pg. 36.

<sup>78</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Annual Message to Congress,” December 3, 1861, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 5, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 50.

The Confiscation Act had created a great opportunity for an increase of men in the Union Army. The Act got the ball rolling for thousands of slaves to cross the Union lines. Self-emancipation created pressure for Lincoln to act on slavery on his own accord. By late November of 1861 he had drafted a bill for compensated emancipation in Delaware which stated:

There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, at any time after the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand, eight hundred and sixtyseven, within the said State of Delaware, except in the punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted: *Provided*, that said State shall, in good faith prevent, so far as possible, the carrying of any person out of said State, into involuntary servitude, beyond the limits of said State, at any time after the passage of this act.<sup>79</sup>

Compensated emancipation became important to Lincoln as a form of compromise to keep the nation together. It would give the slaveholder a period servitude before the slave was emancipated. In March of 1862, Lincoln sent a message to Congress proposing to adopt a joint resolution of gradual compensated emancipation writing, “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 it’s discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences.”<sup>80</sup> In reaction to the proposal, Pennsylvania Representative Thaddeus Stevens scorned Lincoln’s idea as, “the most diluted, milk and water gruel proposition ... ever given to the American nation.”<sup>81</sup> Although Lincoln was criticized by some radicals, Frederick Douglass

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<sup>79</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Draft of a Bill for Compensated Emancipation in Delaware,” November 26[?], 1861, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 5, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 30.

<sup>80</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Message to Congress,” March 6, 1862, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 5, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 145-147.

<sup>81</sup> Adam Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), pg. 96.

characterized him as “a brave man trying against great odds, to do right. An honest patriot endeavoring to save his country in its day of peril.”<sup>82</sup>

The pressure from the Radical Republicans pressed Lincoln to admit, “Stevens, Sumner and Wilson simply haunt me with their importunities for a Proclamation of Emancipation. Wherever I go and whatever way I turn, they are on my tail, and still in my heart, I have the deep conviction that the hour has not yet come.”<sup>83</sup>

On April 16, 1862, Lincoln signed the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act that effectively ended slavery in D.C. through compensation. It provided up to \$300 to slaveholders per freed slave and \$100 for any slave that would voluntarily leave the United States to colonize in Haiti or Liberia.<sup>84</sup>

### **The Peninsula Campaign**

The Civil War’s pace had become slower than expected. Lincoln positioned Gen. McClellan to command the Army of the Potomac in early March with the intent of capturing Richmond. Lincoln expected the war to have ended a lot quicker and enacted this amphibious plan, proposed by McClellan, to end it as quickly as possible. Lincoln approved the campaign, as long as there were enough troops to cover Washington. McClellan’s plan involved moving his army through the Chesapeake Bay and getting to the Confederate capital.

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<sup>82</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), pg. 491.

<sup>83</sup> Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War*, (New York, Hill and Wang, 2009), pg. 314.

<sup>84</sup> John W. Burgess, *The Civil War and the Constitution, 1859-1865, Volume 2*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1901), pg. 82.



After hearing of McClellan's plan, Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston moved his troops out of Mannasas to procure a better position about 40 miles south of the Rappahannock River.<sup>85</sup> McClellan, known for his constant wariness of the Confederacy's strength, failed to take advantage of his tactical gain leading Robert E. Lee to take over the Confederate troops.<sup>86</sup> Lee overwhelmed McClellan's troops during the Seven Day's Battles forcing him to retreat.

The failed attempt at ending the war with the capture of Richmond in 1862 led Lincoln to other means of resolution. Some historians have cited the probable effects of a premature victory at Richmond could have included the Union reverting to the status quo of 1860.<sup>87</sup> Historian David Blair writes, "the radical argument was beginning to have an effect, even if still held in check by moderates...but that very victory [Lee's victory in retaining Richmond] would help cost the Confederacy the very thing it had gone to war to preserve."<sup>88</sup>

## **The Proclamation**

Mounting political and military pressure drove Lincoln to seek a definitive resolution. After being endorsed by Lincoln, Congress passed an act that banned slavery in all federal territories. The Second Confiscation Act was passed in July. It authorized the emancipation of slaves belonging to slaveholders aiding the rebel cause.

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<sup>85</sup> History.com Staff, "Peninsula Campaign," (2009), *History.com*, accessed November 17, 2017, <http://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/peninsula-campaign>.

<sup>86</sup> Brian Burton, "The Peninsula Campaign," April 5, 2011, *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, accessed November 17, 2017, [https://www.encyclopediaivirginia.org/Peninsula\\_Campaign](https://www.encyclopediaivirginia.org/Peninsula_Campaign).

<sup>87</sup> William Blair, "Convincing Moderates in the North of the Need for a Hard War," in *The Richmond Campaign of 1862: The Peninsula and the Seven Days*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press Books, 2000), pg. 177.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

Lincoln again appealed to the border states to favor gradual emancipation:

I intend no reproach or complaint when I assure you that in my opinion, if you all had voted for the resolution in the gradual emancipation message of last March, the war would now be substantially ended. And the plan therein proposed is yet one of the most potent, and swift means of ending it....I do not speak of emancipation *at once*, but of a *decision* at once to emancipate *gradually*. Room in South America for colonization, can be obtained cheaply, and in abundance; and when numbers shall be large enough to be company and encouragement for one another, the freed people will not be so reluctant to go.<sup>89</sup>

On July 14th, he presented a draft of a bill that would, “compensate any State which may abolish slavery within its limits, the passage of which, substantially as presented, I respectfully, and earnestly recommend” to congress, which they left without action or resolution.<sup>90</sup> As Lincoln began drafting the Emancipation Proclamation, he kept it within his presidential cabinet per their advice, waiting for a substantial Union victory. In regards to opinions about the effect of slavery on the war, Lincoln wrote about his main concern being the preservation of the Union in a letter to Horace Greeley the editor of the *New York Tribune*,

If there be those who would not save the Union, unless they could at the same time *save* slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time *destroy* slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do *not* believe it would help to save the Union.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Appeal to Border State Representatives to Favor Compensated Emancipation,” July 12, 1862, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 5, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 318-320.

<sup>90</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “To the Senate and House of Representatives,” July 14, 1862, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 5, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 325.

<sup>91</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “To Horace Greeley,” August 22, 1862, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 5, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 389.

It is important to note that Lincoln wrote the letter to Mr. Greeley after drafting the Emancipation Proclamation. He used this letter to position the use of the Proclamation to save the Union rather than a personal gesture on the issue of slavery. Historian Todd Brewster argues that Lincoln needed to maintain that the preservation of the Union was of utmost importance. He notes that Lincoln assessed he was bound by the Constitution to emancipate the slaves “as an act of military necessity.”<sup>92</sup>

### **Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation**

With the progression of the war and feeling that it would be best to announce the proclamation during a military advantage, Lincoln decided to announce the Emancipation Proclamation after a Union victory. The victory at Antietam allowed Lincoln to go forward with his announcement.

On September 22, 1862, Abraham Lincoln announced the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation which freed the slaves in the rebelling states except for the areas controlled by the Union. As the abolition of slaves became a military objective, the Union armies advanced south and liberated more slaves, eventually freeing all three million of the slaves in the Confederacy.<sup>93</sup>

Even after the proclamation, Lincoln was still insisting on colonization and setting up colonies for the free slaves.<sup>94</sup> In his annual message to Congress that year he proposed three

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<sup>92</sup> Todd Brewster, *Lincoln's Gamble: The Tumultuous Six Months that Gave America the Emancipation Proclamation and Changed the Course of the Civil War*, (New York: Scribner, 2014), pg. 59.

<sup>93</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, pg. 407.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 408.

constitutional amendments; allowed slavery continue for another thirty-seven years, permanently freed slaves that had received freedom during the war while compensating owners that had remained loyal to the Union, and appropriated money to colonize freedmen outside the United States.<sup>95</sup>

While the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation did free the slaves in the rebel states, it did not free the ones in the Union. It was seen as a warning to the South, forcing them to lay down arms within one-hundred days. Its reference to compensation differed from the final Emancipation Proclamation which did not reference colonization or compensated emancipation. The final version sanctioned the enlistment of African-American soldiers.

The preliminary emancipation proclamation caused uproar as some Northerners protested against a war for the emancipation of slaves. The South refused to rejoin the Union on account of believing they would win the war. Lincoln was perceptive enough to realize the Confederates would not concede to his measure.

By January 1st, 1863 with a final version enacted, Lincoln was able to have black troops participate in the war. In an attempt to raise a force of black troops, Lincoln wrote to Andrew Johnson, "The bare sight of 50,000 armed and drilled black soldiers on the banks of the Mississippi would end the rebellion at once."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Annual Message to Congress," December 1, 1862, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 5*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 531.

<sup>96</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Letter to Andrew Johnson, March 26, 1863, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 6* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1990), pg. 150-151.

## **CONCLUSION**

After much investigation, the research conducted has led to the conclusion that Abraham Lincoln was pressured by outside means to further explore emancipation. His views evolved from his political beginnings, as sentiments of sectionalism and tension rose which exploded into war.

As Lincoln championed for and created acts of compensated emancipation, the change is seen from his previous stance for colonization. The research showed an evolving Lincoln's political thought as well as justification for his actions during the war.

Examples like using emancipation as an act to help the Union win, contradicted his previous idea to not interfere with the slave trade. The research done, as well as common discourse shows that Lincoln placed importance on the Union before getting a handle on slavery. This helps understand the slow progression towards emancipation as Union victory helped steer towards it.

Using the research to support my claims, I achieve to contribute in the scholarly debate of Lincoln's portrayal as an evolving rather than a "great" emancipator. His decision to emancipate when he did is chronicled in the thesis to supplement my argument of Lincoln as an evolving emancipator.

Adding to the current historiographical debate of the Lincoln narrative, this thesis explains the gray in a black and white perspective of Lincoln. While some historians like James M. McPherson use the popular discourse of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator, others like Eric Foner and Erica Armstrong Dunbar support the abolitionists movement as the main reason for the emancipation of slaves, seeing Lincoln's role as less than "great."

The importance of understanding Lincoln's emancipation of the slaves is in realizing the external factors that contributed to it. While the argument of Lincoln as the great emancipator exalts him, my thesis aims to give credit where it is due. Lincoln was not alone in his process to emancipation but one can admire his growth into the iconic role.

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