

# Emancipation Proclamation

## Path to freedom and equality for Blacks or Stupendous Fraud?

President Lincoln is esteemed and in many cases worshiped by both liberals and conservatives alike. Lincoln's New Year's Day of 1863 "Emancipation Proclamation" has been hailed as one of the most heroic and compassionate acts ever. It is one of the most cited epic accomplishments of President Lincoln. It is one of the reasons that President Lincoln is on Mt Rushmore, and is seated within his own "Temple" at our nation's Capitol. Is this acclaim, esteem and worship accorded to President Lincoln and his Emancipation Proclamation based on its intent, actual accomplishments, or blind devotion to an ideology? Let us dig beneath the leaves of adulation that have piled up over the years since 1865.

Firstly, without much argument from the Lincolnites, the Proclamation on its face was a sham. Within the Proclamation, Lincoln offers freedom to slaves that are not under his control, but does not offer the same freedom to slaves that are under his control. As the London Spectator opined in 1863, "Lincoln's Proclamation says Slavery is just fine, as long as you are loyal to the Union". Lincoln himself on many occasions admitted that the whole purpose was a war measure designed to weaken the Confederacy and to keep Britain and France from acknowledging the CSA as an independent nation with no intent on the betterment of the slave's plight. Here is a quote from his Cabinet Secretary Seward reflecting the irony of the Proclamation, *"We show our sympathy with Slavery by emancipating Slaves where we cannot reach them, and holding them in bondage wherever we can set them free"*. One of Lincoln's aides William Stoddard had this to say about it, *"How many editors and how many other penmen within these past few days rose in anger to remind Lincoln that this is a war to save the Union only, and they never gave him any authority to run it as an Abolition war. They never, never told him that he might set the Negroes free, and, now that he has done so, or futilely pretended to do so, he is a more unconstitutional tyrant and a more odious dictator than ever he was before"*.

What were Lincoln's own thoughts on emancipation and what to do about Slavery? Lincoln clearly did not approve of the institution of Slavery morally, but it was the, what to do about it is what he wrestled with. He was aware of how Britain and other nations eliminated slavery via gradual emancipation, and incorporation of wage slaves who could be hired and fired at will, with no regard for their well being. As they got sick or infirmed they could be tossed on the street and replaced by fresh immigrants willing to work for far less than the cost of caring for a slave. The slave owners were compensated for their slaves and eventually all slavery was eliminated without much ado. There was also some preparation for the assimilation of the freed slaves into society at large so as to allow for a smooth transition.

However Lincoln had some issues with the Negro race in general, and that complicated any solution to eliminating slavery. For example here is one quote of Lincoln, while he debated Stephen Douglas, *"I am not, nor ever been in favor of bringing about the social and political equality of the White and Black races; that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters of the free Negroes, or jurors, or qualifying them to hold office, or having them marry with White people. I will say in addition that there is a physical difference between the White and Black races which, I suppose will forever forbid the two races from living together upon the terms of social and political equality; and inasmuch as they cannot so live, that while they do remain together, there must be the position of the superiors, and of the inferiors; and I as much as any other man, am in favor of the superior position being assigned to the White man"*.

It is very clear that Lincoln believes that the Black race is inferior and cannot live as the equals of the White race. This basic belief then creates the conflict with how Lincoln reasons with himself with this quote, *"If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do, as to the existing institution. My first impulse would be to free all the slaves, and send them to Liberia, -- to their own native land. But a moment's reflection would convince me, that whatever of high hope, (as I think there is) there may be in this, in the long run, its sudden execution is impossible. If they were all landed there in a day, they would all perish in the next ten days; and there are not surplus shipping and surplus money enough in the world to carry them there in many times ten days. What then? Free them all, and keep them among us as underlings? Is it quite certain that this betters their condition? I think I would not hold one in slavery, at any rate; yet the point is not clear enough for me to denounce people upon. What next? Free them, and make them politically and socially, our equals? My own feelings will not admit of this; and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of white people will not."* So here we are given a glimpse of the contortions and pretzel logic Lincoln was saddled with.

Since Lincoln believed the Negroes to be inferiors he could not allow them to be equal with Whites upon emancipation, so that option was closed, he also realized that by freeing them without any preparation or compensation that they would most probably be worse off than as slaves, he also toyed with the idea of freeing them and then deporting them out from America, to rid us once and for all of the “Negro Problem”. The deportation scheme was one that Lincoln would gravitate toward to more and more as time went on, and it was a plank of a major abolitionist group as well. Bottom line, free the slaves so we can deport them.

Let us move over to the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment that supposedly was Lincoln’s vision that finally passed and freed the slaves. The first version of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment was also known as the Corwin Amendment. This amendment was created to offer inducement to the recently seceded 7 States to return to the Union. This amendment was primarily an irrevocable guarantee of slavery (where it existed). The Republican controlled congress passed the bill overwhelmingly, Lincoln referred to it in his First Inaugural address, and several Northern States, including Illinois ratified it. Lincoln hoped to use the irrevocable guarantee of slavery to get the wayward States to return to the Union. So much for the “War on Slavery” here. The next version was the pre Emancipation Proclamation version, where he offered the Slave States till 1900 to begin to dismantle the Slaveocracy, (a gradual emancipation which most Southern Abolitionists agreed with) to raise funds to compensate slave owners for their property, and to raise funds for the costs of deportation of the newly freed slaves. Congress at once knew that the cost of this idea was prohibitive and tabled Lincoln’s proposal. In retrospect had congress acted on this idea of Lincoln’s, not only would we have avoided the devastation and even greater cost of the War Between the States, but race relations would not have suffered they did. The final version of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment was a confirmation of the Emancipation Proclamation as it finally was drafted, which did not allow for any preparation for the 4 million newly freed slaves, and thus created a second class citizenship state (underlings) for those 4 million negroes. The Northern States passed laws designed to keep the Negroes from residing, working, or even traveling in their States, and the destruction wrought by the corruption of the Reconstruction regimes devastated race relations in the South. The result of the Emancipation Proclamation and the final 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment was exactly what Lincoln previously knew would happen when he said that he did not think that freeing them only to make them second class citizens (underlings) would improve things.

With Reconstruction, the Freedman's Bureau was given absolute power to handle the Negro Problem. Its agents could arrest any freed slave, and transport him to areas anywhere else for compulsory labor, it had its own military style courts of for freedmen, superseding civil courts in every city and county in eleven Southern States.

Reverend and Author Robert Dabney pointed out its obligation "to do good to your charge upon a great scale" and with as much zeal as it had showed "waging a gigantic war for four years". Dabney pointed out that as flawed and immoral as the slavery system might have been, if the South with all its disadvantages, was able to provide health care, housing, stable environments, provide food, reduce infant mortality, care for the elderly, teach literacy, trades and skills, introduce Christianity, etc, then the Freedmen's Bureau as an agent of the Federal Government was bound to improve the plight of the Negro in return for the devastation, and cost of blood and treasure.

The sad truth was that the Freeman's Bureau was indeed a colossal failure, and could not even clothe or feed the millions under their charge. Thousands of newly freed slaves just starved to death. Most the rest barely survived as a despised underclass both in the North and the South. The result of the Emancipation Proclamation was devastation on the Black race that lives on until this day. Once just has to look at what the condition of the Black Race is today with the welfare dependency, high levels of incarceration, unemployment, crime, despondency, despair, broken families, etc. All of these terrible tragedies were the result of recklessly freeing millions of unprepared people, after waging a total war on their homeland. Lincoln foresaw this result and did it anyway, admittedly as a short term war measure.

Frederick Douglas on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Proclamation stated "*I admit that the Negro... has made little progress from barbarism to civilization, and that he is in deplorable condition since his emancipation. That he is worse off, in many respects, than when he was a slave, I am compelled to admit it, but I contend that the fault is not his, but that of his heartless accusers... Though he is nominally free, he is actually a slave. I here and now denounce the Emancipation Proclamation as a stupendous fraud, a fraud upon him, and a fraud upon the world.*"

Then on the centennial anniversary of the Proclamation, Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963 standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial had this to say, *“Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation, This momentous decree came as a great beacon of light of hope to millions of Negro slave who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free.”*

So here again the tragedy of Lincoln’s desperate move to save the Union without regard to the cost not only to those who only wished to do as the Declaration of Independence avered, *“to alter or abolish the government as they saw fit”*, as well as without any regard to the welfare and well being of four million slaves. Saving the Union, even at the point of a bayonet, (what part of our voluntary union did he miss?) was the paramount issue, as we can see with this famous quote to Horace Greeley,

*“I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored; the nearer the Union will be “the Union as it was.” 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.*

Other than his “final solution” of mass deportation of all negroes, Lincoln did not propose any other rational solutions. As he struggled with the earlier quote, *“if he had all the power in the world,”* he did not know how to deal with the slavery issue.

In conclusion, with all that has transpired from New Years Day in 1863 to the present, each one of you can answer the question about the Emancipation Proclamation, was it a path to freedom and equality for blacks, or was it as Frederick Douglas said, a stupendous fraud? Maybe a little of both? The answer is for each and every one of you to decide.

**I thank you for your time and attention,**

**Your Obedient Servant**

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