

Breaking the chains of slavery: from early compromises to the emancipation procla...

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Introduction

‘ Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, can not long retain it.’ Abraham Lincoln broke barriers in the fight against slavery. At first, he was not against slavery but his views changed over time. Early on, Lincoln tried to compromise with slaveholders and abolitionist. Over time, Lincoln compromised less and took a more active role in fighting slavery. The purpose of this paper is to show how Lincolns views evolved and that he became one of slavery’s strongest opponents.

Changing His Views

Early in his career, Lincoln was a simple prairie lawyer in Springfield, Illinois with no major interest in slavery. Once he was elected to Congress, slavery was a big topic for politicians. ‘ The Constitution explicitly protected property, and slaveholders regarded their slaves as just that — and so did the Founding Fathers in their time. The Constitution was almost sacred to Lincoln. Lincoln started changing his views because he wanted to beat his rival, Stephen A. Douglas, to become the leader of the Republican party, which did not support the spreading of slavery.

Compromises

As he advanced in his political career, Lincoln made compromises regarding slavery at first. One of his compromises was supporting colonization, which was an idea to send former slaves back to Africa. As President, he had conversations with opponents of slavery and ‘ opted for a compromise: let slavery exist where it was granted by the Constitution, but contain the system and prevent its further expansion.” i Changing attitudes in the

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country and the Civil War also caused Lincoln to change his views. ‘ Neither slave owners nor slaves supported colonization. Slavery was beginning to disintegrate in the South. And the Union Army was looking for new soldiers to enlist — and they found willing African-American men waiting for them in the South.’

The Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment

During the Civil War, Lincoln wound up having many conversations with abolitionists. He also realized ending slavery could help end the Civil war faster. These are a few of the factors that changed Lincoln into a leader in the anti-slavery movement Early in the Civil War, Lincoln approved a policy that did not allow fugitive slaves to be returned. Many thousands of slaves were freed because of this policy. It also gave the North hundreds of thousands of additional soldiers by the end of the war. Abraham Lincoln told his generals to emancipate slaves as they fought their way south. Lincoln used abolitionist generals such as David Hunter.

In addition to what he did with the military, Lincoln also worked in politics to help end slavery. He got laws passed such as the 2nd Confiscation Act which helped to free more slaves. On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It marked a turning point in the war and it was the beginning of the end for slavery. ‘ What’s more, the Emancipation Proclamation made a promise: it promised that the United States was committed to ending slavery once and for all. It promised African Americans in the South that under no circumstances would they be returned to slavery

if the North won the war. Finally, it promised the Confederacy that there was no turning back the clock to before the war.

The Emancipation Proclamation made the promise that the Civil War would change the United States forever.” V Lincoln reached out to the South peacefully as well. He offered a Reconstruction policy to southern states rejoin the Union peacefully if they abolished slavery. President Lincoln did not stop there. He pressured politicians to support fighting to free slaves through many speeches and letters. Lincoln pushed hard for the 13th Amendment to be ratified, which happened on January 31, 1865. This amendment abolished slavery in the entire United States of America. In the last speech he gave before being assassinated, he was considering voting rights for black people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can see how Abraham Lincoln progressed from being on the sidelines in the fight against slavery to being one of the greatest abolitionists in American history. Lincoln broke many racial barriers of his day. He fought and died trying to break the chains of slavery. Although he did not start out as an abolitionist, Abraham Lincoln’s fight to free slaves made him one of the greatest presidents in American history.

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