About the emancipation proclamation

The issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation was largely influenced by Abraham Lincoln's negative opinion of slavery, however he was also under pressure from his peers and the slave owners of the United States as well. The President expressed his dislike for the concept of slavery in documents and speeches more than thirty years before the actual issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. President Lincoln openly displayed his opinion in a public speech in July of 1858, describing his hatred for the subject and that he believed that it would dissipate eventually.

However, in a letter in August of 1862, he also expressed the point that his overall goal was not focused on slavery. He explained that the main priority in his presidency was to do what would save the Union. Lincoln eventually issued of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September of 1862, warning the Confederacy that he would declare slaves forever freed if it did not lay down arms by January 1st. While he intended to continue his previous plan to gradually abolish slavery, he felt a different method was necessary and freedom was announced for a nearly 4 million slaves on January 1st of 1863. There are many documents displaying President Lincoln's dislike for slavery, however pressure from his fellow Republicans seems to be a major factor in the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation over all.

In November of 1861, Lincoln proposed his plan to gain support of slave holders in ending slavery to political leaders in Delaware. Although Delaware slave owners refused his plan and the surrender of the 1, 800 slaves in their state, he continued to promote this plan to the border states throughout 1862. While he expressed a dislike of slavery, in August of 1862, during a meeting with black American leaders he addressed slavery as the greatest

wrong inflicted on any people however in the same conversation also stating that but for your race among us there could be not war. The reason for these opposing comments being that Lincoln himself hated slavery and as a Republican, his political party also believed that it should be removed and put it in the course of ultimate extinction. However, as the president, the constitution protected slavery in states where citizens wanted it. Lincoln was also concerned that he would lose support from border states as well as Northern Democrats who would have most likely opposed war for the Union if a move against slavery had been made. An event that began the road to issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation was when three slaves escaped to General Benjamin Butler's lines and were then grated freedom on the basis that they were declared to be contraband of war. Hundreds of of other slaves also escaped on this basis, by simply crossing Union lines where they would often find shelter and protection.

In August of 1861, a confiscation act was passed which stated this contraband status on all slaves who had been used in direct support of the Confederate war effort. 2 In March of the same year, a new article of war was passed forbidding army officers from returning these slaves to their owners. By 1862, Republicans were convinced that this war against slaveholders should become a war against slavery altogether, putting pressure on Lincoln to produce an emancipation policy. However, while this idea would coincide with his views, Lincoln felt a need to balance convictions against the danger of alienating a portion of the Union. By July of 1862, Lincoln decided a more serious measure was necessary in the form of a proclamation from himself freeing all slaves in states which were against the Union. On January 1st of

1863, a final form of this proclamation identified the states which were considered to be in rebellion. This document excluded the so-called border states of Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, where slavery existed side by side with Unionist sentiment.

The proclamation could have been used as a military strategy in the war, however Secretary of State William Seward wanted him to delay issuance of the document because he believed that Union setbacks would make the proclamation less powerful. In respect of Seward's suggestion, Lincoln held the document back and waited for a Union victory. The plan Lincoln had was to convince slave holders to agree with the abolition of slavery. He had even taken a proposal to a group of black leaders which suggested that their presence was a main reason for this conflict, however those presented with this refused to consider emigration from their land of birth. 1 The disintegrating slave trade in the South and the war being at a stalemate led more Northerners to agree with abolitionist beliefs. 1 Previously, if Lincoln had made an immediate decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation when he originally planned, he could have been at a disadvantage because the border states and Northern Democrats would turn against the war if the Republicans had moved for the abolition of slavery in 1861. 2 However, if he did not act on slavery, there would be a risk of alienating the Republicans. Lincoln decided that the war needed a greater goal for which it was to be fought.

While the Emancipation Proclamation served as a very important starting point for the abolition of slavery as a whole, however this did not happen with a stroke of his pen. 1 Due to the fact that the four border states were

not included in the the document, considering that they were not in rebellion against the Union, around 750, 00 slaves remained. Even not including this still substantial amount of enslaved men, women and children, it was miniscule compared to the 3. 1 million who were freed through this proclamation. Without the decision to issue this Proclamation, and the steps taken leading up to to the issuance of the proclamation, a Union victory might not have been possible. Lincoln paved the way for more advancements in terms of black suffrage with his decision to ultimately listen to the suggestions from the Republicans.