

# Abraham Lincoln: the great emancipator?



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Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States of America, was the man who rose to the presidency and took the steps needed to end the situation of separation by making sure the South didn't secede from the Union and continue to be a slave-owning population. An emancipator frees people from bondage or oppression, Lincoln's main priority in his term in office was to re-unite the North and South, not to free the slaves. He believed that white people were superior to African-Americans and he was 'playing politics,' in the sense that he wanted to please the majority of the population, not the slaves he was freeing.

President Lincoln did sign the Emancipation Proclamation, but that didn't make him "the Great Emancipator." In the end, the South was defeated, slavery was dissolved, and the United States of America lived, but President Abraham Lincoln was inaccurately labelled as the hero.

While in office, Abraham Lincoln's main objective was to re-unite the North and the South, which had seceded.

Although many believed the Civil war was started to free slaves, it was mainly started so the South would become part of the Union again. If Lincoln did nothing, the Union would be permanently severed, the war was to save the Union (1). He would do anything to save the Union. In a letter in 1862, he proclaimed that everything he did with slavery and the Blacks, he did because he believed it would help save the Union (2). He led the population to believe that the Civil war was all about the freedom of slaves. Lincoln just figured that the South would back down if there was the threat of freeing slaves (3). Abraham Lincoln could have cared less about the freedom of slaves, his goal was to get the confederacy to re-unite with the Union.

Abraham Lincoln felt that African-Americans were inferior to white people. Lincoln stated there was a distinguishing difference between white people and African-Americans in general. In the Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Lincoln presented his views on how Blacks are not equal in colour and moral or intellectual endowment (4). He often stated the African-Americans were not equal in social or political aspects. He stated his opposition to Blacks becoming voters, jurors, office holders, or intermarrying with white people (5). Lincoln felt that the Republicans were wrong in thinking the Declaration of Independence included all men. He felt it didn't include Blacks, therefore stating that Blacks aren't people (6). Abraham Lincoln believed that whites were superior to African-Americans, thus they were not treated equally.

Lincoln wanted to please the majority of the population, not the African-Americans he was freeing. One of Lincoln's concerns was to keep slavery out of the territories. He wanted to preserve that land for poor white people in North and in Europe, who wanted cheap land (7). He proceeded to make a personal strategy to benefit some states. The gradual, compensated emancipation provided financial aid to any state which took that approved that idea (8). Lincoln also had ideas that he thought the bulk of the population would approve of. He persuaded a large group of Blacks to set up colonies in Panama, Haiti and Liberia (9). President Lincoln didn't care about the slaves and their reactions and feelings towards his actions, he was playing politics and pleasing his people.

The Emancipation Proclamation was signed by Abraham Lincoln on September 22, 1862, ensuring the freedom of slaves. He issued it so that all slaves in the confederate, controlled by South, would be free (10). Blacks

should have the right of life, liberty, and the pursuits of happiness (11). The Emancipation Proclamation was the first law about freeing slaves that was written down on paper. Lincoln had always verbally stated his ideas on how to free slaves, this was the first idea in ink (12). The slaves had something to finally look forward to in their lives. The Civil War filled them with high hopes for freedom and prosperity (13). Abraham Lincoln took the steps needed to encourage the possibility of freedom of slaves through the Emancipation Proclamation.

However, even though the Emancipation Proclamation was endorsed, it didn't make him "the Great Emancipator." Blacks within the confederacy were still slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation would not come into action for three months after it was signed (14). He only signed it as a bribe towards the South to save the Union. He confirmed that he would do anything to save the Union, "What I do about slavery, and the coloured race, I do because I believe it helps save the Union." (15). He didn't have the authoritative power to just go ahead and free the slaves. The Congress was the only group that had the power to pass and make the Emancipation Proclamation into a legitimate law (16). Lincoln's actions may have given hope to slaves, but it was false hope, therefore just by signing the Emancipation Proclamation didn't make him "the Great Emancipator."

Abraham Lincoln was not "the Great Emancipator." Throughout his time in office, he worked harder trying to re-unite the Union, rather than free the slaves. He felt that white people were superior to African-Americans and 'played politics' in the sense that he wanted to please the majority of the people rather than the blacks he was supposedly freeing. Lincoln did

however sign the Emancipation Proclamation, ensuring the slaves in the South would become free, but it gave slaves false hope and didn't make him " the Great Emancipator." Lincoln may have been named the hero for the work he did in uniting the Union, but not with freeing slaves.

Although I believe that President Lincoln was not " the Great Emancipator," he was the man who rose to presidency to take on the roll of bringing the Union back together. Also, even though he didn't actually free the slaves, eventually they were free through the steps he started to make. I think the moral of this story is just that " its better late than never" and that you should take a stand in what you believe because it could possibility turn out for the best in the future.