

Was Lincoln Really the "Great Emancipator"?

By DR. CLAUD ANDERSON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER AND AUTHOR OF
"DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS"

Historical facts suggest President Lincoln was every thing but 'the great emancipator of black slaves.' During the earlier years of the Civil War, President Lincoln publicly claimed he would not and could not free black slaves. He even acknowledged that the Civil War was not about black people, but about national unity.

Lincoln was not passive in his support of slavery even when Union commanders issued orders freeing slaves in captured Confederate territory. Lincoln blocked such orders at least twice. Lincoln's position was strengthened by the U.S. Congress in 1861, when it passed and referred to the states in an amendment to the Constitution that guaranteed that congress could never abolish black slavery in America. Few northern politicians had any interest in freeing black slaves. They were concerned about breaking the wealth and political power base of the South.

Most politicians knew that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was a sham. Lincoln was President of the Union only. He could not and did not free black slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation spoke gloriously about freeing slaves in the deep South, over which the Union had no authority. Yet, it ignored blacks in the border states over which Lincoln and his administration was succinctly put in Lincoln's letter of December 22, 1860, to Alexander Stephen, soon to become Vice-President of the Confederacy, "Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would, directly or indirectly, interfere with the slave, or with them, about the slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you, as once a friend, and still, I hope, not an enemy, that there is no more danger in this respect than it was in the days of Washington."

The Great Emancipators Sick Joke

There is an old adage that whatever a man jokes about is what he truly feels in his heart. If there is any truth in this saying, it speaks poorly for President Abraham Lin-

coln. After Elijah Lovejoy, an anti-slavery editor had been killed by pro-slavery forces, Lincoln made a joke out of his death. In a speech in Worcester, Massachusetts, he said, "I have heard you have abolitionists here. We have a few in Illinois and we shot one the other day." The crowd roared with laughter. But on the serious side, many of Lincoln's formal statements revealed he held no love for blacks, free or enslaved.

Reparations for Slaveholders?

Abraham Lincoln was growing increasingly sensitive to and fearful of, the divisive and explosive issue of slavery. Early in the first term of his presidency, Lincoln offered reparations to southern slaveholders. Lincoln devised a scheme to free the slaves gradually over a period of some 30 years. He would offer reparations to the southern slaveholders and pay them for their "losses" out of the national treasury. To carry out his plan, he needed the approval of Congress to pay southern slaveholders nearly a half billion dollars, only a portion of their total \$7 billion investment. This was an unimaginable amount of money for that period in history.

Slavery Divided Families and the Nation

The Civil War is often referred to as the Great Dividing War. Although symbolically it was fought to preserve the Union, in reality it was fought to preserve slavery.

It was President Lincoln who said that a house divided against itself would not stand. He could have been speaking about his own household. The Civil War reached inside the White House and touched Lincoln's family, the First Family of this nation, and divided it as it divided the nation itself, along lines of Union versus Confederacy.

The division within the Lincoln household became so great that the United States Senate Committee on the Conduct of the War felt it had to deal with it was a national issue. The committee met to consider charges of treason against the President's wife, Mary Lincoln. Lincoln came to her rescue and read a brief statement denying that any member of his fam-

ily had collaborated with the enemy.

Four of Lincoln's brothers-in-law wore Confederate uniforms. One of them, Lieutenant David P. Todd, was

charged with brutality against Union soldiers held as prisoners of war in Richmond, Virginia. Mary Lincoln's two sisters were married to Confeder-

ate officers, while her brother, Dr. George Todd, was a volunteer confederate surgeon who called Lincoln an "unhung scoundrel."



JUNETEENTH • JUNE 19

January 1, 1863, the date of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, is solemnly commemorated in many American Black communities. It is however, only one of a number of "freedom day" celebrations held on various dates, for the end of slavery was a gradual process and often a local one which evoked local observances. Thus the date on which General Gordon Granger arrived in Texas - June 19, 1863 with the avowed intention of enforcing Lincoln's proclamation, is commemorated a "Juneteenth" in eastern Texas and beyond, and a considerable body of tradition and lore has grown up about it. Why is it called "Juneteenth?" Mrs. E.B. Tollette, who lives in a rural black community of Tollette, Arkansas, has this to say: "I was talking with a friend about it today and he said, jokingly, 'You know how we name things,' and said 'was the nineteenth' and says, 'we nickname these things.'"

JUNETEENTH EVENTS

Basketball Tournament

The First Annual Juneteenth Basketball Tournament will be held at S.E.I. on June 17, 18, and 19. All are invited to play!! There are four age groups (10-14, 15-18, 18-30 and over 30) playing. A small registration fee is requested. This tournament consists of a double elimination to Semi-Finals match. Register now. Limited number of teams can participate/ first come first serve. Call 503/286-9172.

Juneteenth Carnival

Celebrate the remembrance of Juneteenth at a carnival. The event will be held in NE. Portland (on MLK Blvd. And Portland Blvd.) on June 17 - 20. Cost is \$2 or \$1 with a canned food donation. Children under 10 years old attend for free.

Passage Over Celebration

On Saturday, June 19, a Passage Over ceremony will be held at Bethel AME Church (at 8th & Jarrett). This year's celebration includes a gathering of speakers, vendors, dignitaries, and entertainers; free horse and buggy rides for the children; a Yoruba priestess overseeing the Passage Over ceremony; and lively parade. The parade will start at Bethel AME to Skidmore and MLK Blvd. Abraham Lincoln will read the Emancipation Proclamation at that point. Come dressed as the most important people in all history...your own grandparents! Call 503/320-0495, 284-6152, 283-2724, and 287-7532.

Coronation & Dance

The Juneteenth Association in cooperation with various alternative schools in the community will choose the first Juneteenth Queen for this annual local event being held on June 18. A dance follows. Volunteers and cash donations requested. Call Chairman Woody Broadnax at 503/422-3477 or James D. Scurry at 503/286-9172 for more details.

Ralph Ellison

To commemorate the release of *Juneteenth*, a new book by Ralph Ellison, the Oregon Council for the Humanities is joining forces with Portland Arts & Lectures to host a community celebration of this major literary event at the First Congregational Church in Portland on Tuesday, June 22 at 7:30 PM. Featuring readings by the book by John Callahan, the evening will also include music by renowned jazz pianist Darrell Grant. Tickets available at OCH or from Portland Arts & Lectures 503/227-2583.