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# Abraham Lincoln And Emancipation

## Introduction

One of the speckles which President Abraham Lincoln had during his tenure as the president of the United States was the issuance of the executive order which stalled the rampant slavery in America. This proclamation was named as Proclamation 95 which targeted the enslaved over 3.5 million African American. As a result of this proclamation, these slaves were emancipated and thus their civil rights were immediately elevated to the status of their former masters. This executive order was issued on January 1, 1863. This executive order retired the retrogressive Fugitive Slave Act which was passed in the year 1850 and provided a mechanism over which errant slaves were to be handled.

Prior to the emancipation, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 allowed for the immediate return of runaway slaves or be branded as contraband and thus kept in reserved slave prisons. In the year 1861 during the month of December, President Lincoln expressed his delight with the free labor systems in his message. In addition, he also indicated his desire to see universal human rights to all American citizens. This came amidst pressure from various concerned citizens who directly confronted the president to halt the slavery given that it brought more harm than good to the union. The persistent rallies and direct letters addressed to the president pushed him to proclaim emancipation after the Congress passed a law barring any form of slavery in all the states. The returning of slaves, as well as reconviction of former slaves, was abolished and thus those who were considered as un-free citizens obtained their full freedom just like their former masters. They were incorporated in the army as well as other state organization which enabled them to begin fending for themselves contrary to the past where they fully relied on their masters for basic requirements

## Implementation

On 22 September the year 1862, the preliminary announcement concerning the official endorsement of emancipation was availed to the Congress members. The official documentation and proclamation came 100 days later. This declaration demanded that all the slaves were to be freed by any means possible even in those states which had yet been reinstated under the federal government. These states included North Carolina, Arkansas, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and South Carolina. This executive order was to be implemented immediately even though some slave masters fiercely opposed this move by the president. However, the wave of change was so immense that no hardline slave master could dare face it.

## Consequences

The consequences that accompanied the emancipation proclamation were numerous. However, Paradis (2012) records that the emancipation proclamation did not manage to afford freedom to any single slave. In his own analysis, emancipation was a hoax which rather was meant to tighten the grip on the slave trade. On the flip, the executive order which saw the inception of

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emancipation proclamation had massive impacts on the journey to realizing full freedom to the African American slaves. As a result, there are numerous accounts which support the fact that freedom to the slaves was witnessed even on the same day when the president signed the emancipation proclamation. Nonetheless, this does not mean that all the slaves got their freedom immediately. Some were informed about their full freedom after a while. In as much as there was verbal opposition by the slave masters concerning the emancipation proclamation, no physical struggle was reported between the slaves and their former masters. In fact, this proclamation set the foundation over which the long-awaited American freedom was to be built.

The abolition of the slave trade was very fundamental towards the plight of unity and peace in the United States. During this time, foundational facilities such as schools, shelters, and medical facilities were developed for the former slaves as a quick way of normalizing them into the American society. Previously, the slaves were mercilessly utilized by the authorities as well as private owner to accomplish various activities such social works among others. When the news of emancipation came about, word of mouth was the main medium of propagation. This in effect gave rise to further confusion in slave camps given that many did not believe such a thing could happen.

## **Political Influence**

The emancipation proclamation was fiercely opposed by Democrats who cited the negative impacts that the proclamation was bound to yield instead of promoting unity and equality among the Americans. Weber in her book published in the year 2008 records that most Democrats predicted increased violence and other forms of civil disobedience that would follow such proclamation. In their own view, the union would remain stronger only if the slavery was further improved. Some Democrats even went to the extreme and thus indicated that the president abused his power by the issuance of such illegal executive order. The aspect of imminent racism further complicated the whole situation and thus varied opinions were generated concerning this executive order. Open disagreements were witnessed from both sides of the party and thus everybody came up with his or her view concerning the emancipation proclamation. This in effect led to multiple splits within both the Democrats and the Republican parties.

Not long after the signing of the emancipation proclamation, the president suspended two of his highly ranked party members. In effect, some voters who were strongly affiliated to these two officials, as well as those Democrats who voted for Lincoln, rebelled against him citing fears over the president's behavior which they perceived as irrational. More effect was witnessed during the 1862 general election where the Democratic Party gained additional 28 seats and also won the governor seat of New York. During this time, Lincoln himself did not see these encroachments into his backyards as a major issue because he regarded them as meager.

## **Confederate Response**

Given the mixed atmosphere around the emancipation proclamation, the Confederates were not left out in this tussle. Immediately after the inception of the emancipation proclamation, many African Americans were incorporated into the army ranks, a move which profusely angered the Confederates. To prove their disappointment, they enacted a law which targeted African American in the battlefield. This law provided that any African American who was caught fighting

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against the Confederacy was to be held and charged in court with slave insurrectionist. This civil wrong warranted any guilty party a lifetime imprisonment. Even though some confederates supported this emancipation of the African Americans hoping that it would allow them to be fixed in the army, some could not stomach it and thus they proceeded and murdered African American soldiers as a swift retaliation. As a reiteration of their deep commitment to promoting slavery through any means possible, the confederates collectively agreed to hike the prices of slaves. Indeed, the Confederates considered the emancipation proclamation as a slap on their faces.

## **International Influence**

At the moment when Lincoln decided to emancipate the African American slaves, most countries over the world had already abolished the slave trade. This gave him a boost in his quest to create an equal America given that the foreign support was overwhelming. Consequentially, the Confederates lost any glimpse of hope which they had concerning their official recognition from other nations. Even though Britain officially opposed the slave trade in the southern confederate, most of her companies continued to indulge in development activities within the Confederate region. The emancipation proclamation also enabled Lincoln to attract international leaders who previously opposed the ongoing civil war. Above all, the African Americans received a victory that they cannot compare to any. Building bridges and even forgetting about the slavery was massively achieved given the full support that the president threw behind the emancipation proclamation. By the time the civil war was ending, most people were afraid that the traditional slavery laws would be reinstated given that they considered emancipation proclamation as a tool which Lincoln used to win the civil war. However, Lincoln expressed his ambition to abolish in totality any element of the slave trade and thus he managed to secure a second term in office. This is because most citizens pledged to support the former slaves in any way possible that would prevent them from accessing their full freedom.