

Slavery, Race, Emancipation

“This is a world of compensations; and he who would be no slave, must consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, can not long retain it.” – Excerpt from letter to Henry Pierce and others, April 6, 1859

“...Anything that argues me into his idea of perfect social and political equality with the negro, is but a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, by which a man can prove a horse-chestnut to be a chestnut horse.” – First Debate with Stephen Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858

“I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality, and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position.” – First Debate with Stephen Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858

“My ancient faith teaches me that all men are created equal.” – 1854 speech, Peoria, Illinois

“I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races. I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people...” – Fourth Lincoln-Douglas Debate, September 18, 1858

“I am a little uneasy about the abolishment of slavery in this District, not but I would be glad to see it abolished, but as to the time and manner of doing it.” – March 24, 1862 Letter to Horace Greeley

“The emancipation proclamation applies to Arkansas. I think it is valid in law, and will be so held by the courts. I think I shall not retract or repudiate it. Those who shall have tasted actual freedom I believe can never be slaves, or quasi slaves again.” – July 31, 1863 Letter to Stephen A. Hurlburt

“You dislike the emancipation proclamation; and, perhaps, would have it retracted. You say it is unconstitutional -- I think differently.” – August 26, 1863 Letter to James Conkling

“But the proclamation, as law, either is valid, or is not valid. If it is not valid, it needs no retraction. If it is valid, it can not be retracted, any more than the dead can be brought to life.” – August 26, 1863 Letter to James Conkling

“Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature -- opposition to it is in his love of justice. These principles are an eternal antagonism; and when brought into collision so

fiercely, as slavery extension brings them, shocks, and throes, and convulsions must ceaselessly follow. Repeal the Missouri Compromise -- repeal all compromises -- repeal the declaration of independence -- repeal all past history, you still can not repeal human nature. It still will be the abundance of man's heart, that slavery extension is wrong; and out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth will continue to speak." – October 16, 1854 Speech at Peoria

"You know I dislike slavery; and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it." – August 24, 1855 Letter to Joshua Speed

"The slave-breeders and slave-traders, are a small, odious and detested class, among you; and yet in politics, they dictate the course of all of you, and are as completely your masters, as you are the master of your own negroes." – August 24, 1855 Letter to Joshua Speed

"I believe this Government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided." – June 16, 1858 House Divided Speech

"I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any Abolitionist." – July 10, 1858 Speech at Chicago

"Now I confess myself as belonging to that class in the country who contemplate slavery as a moral, social and political evil..." – October 7, 1858 Debate at Galesburg, Illinois

"When Judge Douglas says that whoever, or whatever community, wants slaves, they have a right to have them, he is perfectly logical if there is nothing wrong in the institution; but if you admit that it is wrong, he cannot logically say that anybody has a right to do wrong." – October 13, 1858 Debate at Quincy, Illinois

"This is a world of compensations; and he who would be no slave, must consent to have no slave." – April 6, 1859 Letter to Henry Pierce

"Now what is Judge Douglas' Popular Sovereignty? It is, as a principle, no other than that, if one man chooses to make a slave of another man, neither that other man nor anybody else has a right to object." – September 16, 1859 Speech in Columbus, Ohio

"An inspection of the Constitution will show that the right of property in a slave is not "distinctly and expressly affirmed" in it." – February 27, 1860 Speech at the Cooper Institute

"We believe that the spreading out and perpetuity of the institution of slavery impairs the general welfare. We believe -- nay, we know, that that is the only thing that has ever threatened the perpetuity of the Union itself." – September 17, 1859 Speech in Cincinnati, Ohio

“Let there be no compromise on the question of extending slavery. If there be, all our labor is lost, and, ere long, must be done again.” – December 10, 1860 Letter to Lyman Trumbull

“You think slavery is right and ought to be extended; while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. That I suppose is the rub. It certainly is the only substantial difference between us.” – December 22, 1860 Letter to Alexander Stephens

“I say now, however, as I have all the while said, that on the territorial question -- that is, the question of extending slavery under the national auspices, -- I am inflexible. I am for no compromise which assists or permits the extension of the institution on soil owned by the nation.” – February 1, 1861 Letter to William H. Seward

“One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not to be extended.” – March 4, 1861 Inaugural Address

“I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling.” – April 4, 1864 Letter to Albert Hodges

“I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason; I can never be satisfied with anyone who would be blockhead enough to have me.” – Letter to Mrs. Orville H. Browning, April 1, 1838

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“Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves, and under a just god, cannot long retain it.” – April 6, **1869**, Letter to H.L. Pierce

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“Welcome, or unwelcome, agreeable, or disagreeable, whether this shall be an entire slave nation, *is* the issue before us.” – Fragment of a Speech, March 18, 1858

“I think we have fairly entered upon a durable struggle as to whether this nation is to ultimately become all slave or all free, and though I fall early in the contest, it is nothing if I shall have contributed, in the least degree, to the final rightful result.” – Letter to H.D. Shapre, Dec. 8, 1858

“Understanding the spirit of our institutions to aim at the *elevation* of men, I am opposed to whatever tends to *degrade* them.” – Letter to Theodore Canisius, May 17, 1859

“The restoration of the Rebel States to the Union must rest upon the principle of civil and political equality of both races; and it must be sealed by general amnesty.” – Letter to James S. Wadsworth, January 1864

“Thoughtful men must feel that the fate of civilization upon this continent is involved in the issue of our contest.” – Letter to John Maclean, Dec. 27, 1864

“And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.” – Emancipation Proclamation

“And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.” – Emancipation Proclamation

“Still, to use a coarse, but expressive figure, broken eggs can not be mended. I have issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and I can not retract it.” – Letter to John McClernand, Jan. 8, 1863

“I have here stated my purpose according to my view of *official* duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed *personal* wish that all men everywhere could be free.” – Letter to Horace Greeley, Aug. 22, 1862

“In *giving* freedom to the *slave*, we *assure* freedom to the *free* – honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth.” – Message to Congress, Dec. 1, 1862

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedication to the proposition that all men are created equal.” – Nov. 19, 1863

“The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same *word* we do not all mean the same *thing*.” – Address at Baltimore, April 18, 1864

“Every advocate of slavery naturally desires to see blasted, and crushed, the liberty promised the black man by the new constitution.” – Letter to Stephen Hurlbut, Nov. 14, 1864

“They do not make ‘a house divided against itself,’ but they make a house united. If they produce in one section of the country what is called for by the wants of another section, and this other section can supply the wants of the first, they are not matters of discord, but bonds of union, true bonds of union. But can this question of slavery be considered as among *these* varieties in the institutions of the country? I leave it to you to whether, in the history of our Government, this institution of slavery has not always failed to be a bond of union, and, on the contrary, been an apply of discord and an element of division in the house.” – Reply in the Ottawa Debate, August 21, 1858

“It is not my nature, when I see a people borne down by the weight of their shackles – the oppression of tyranny – to make their life more bitter by heaping upon them greater burdens; but rather would I do all in my power to raise the yoke, than to add anything that would tend to crush them.” – Address to Germans at Cincinnati, Feb. 12, 1861

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“Whenever I hear any one arguing for slavery I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally.” *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume VIII, "Speech to One Hundred Fortieth Indiana Regiment" (March 17, 1865), p. 361.