

## Emancipation

At the dawn of the 19th century, Europe's colonial empires embraced slavery. By the end of the century, slavery had disappeared. What happened in the meantime? The Enlightenment, for one thing, which focused on reason as the foundation for government (and everything

else). Reason led Europeans to the inescapable conclusion that slavery could not be tolerated in any civilized society.

That Enlightenment thinking began to take root in America, as well. But, unlike Europe, Americans did not catch emancipation fever, even after Europe had ended slavery. Why? Well, Americans faced a situation that Europeans had not been forced to deal with. England, for example, did not expose its citizens to economic and social chaos with emancipation, because its slaves were in British colonies, not in England itself. Furthermore, England had a very practical incentive to emancipate its colonial slaves. Its commercial competitors relied on slavery, too. Emancipation hurt them far more than it did England, giving England a competitive edge.

The US, on the other hand, was worried about a number of potential problems with nationwide sudden emancipation. Where would free blacks go, and what would they do? They weren't educated. They had no special skills, for the most part. Sudden emancipation would have been cruel to former slaves, because they had not been prepared for it. What if those free blacks swarmed into the Northern states looking for jobs in the North's industrial economy? It was inevitable, since the South offered little or no significant hope of paid employment. That would have been unacceptable to Yankee workers, suddenly being forced to compete with free blacks for jobs, which would also have driven down wages. But whites in both the North and South were even more afraid of another possible unintended consequence of emancipation.

What if freed blacks decided to get revenge for years of forced slave labor? They wouldn't necessarily take it out on Southern whites alone. And whites had good reason to be afraid. Blacks had turned on whites in the West Indies. There were more than 80 uprisings in the Caribbean during the first half of the 19th century, including 11 in Cuba. The worst by far was in Haiti, called the Haitian Revolution. Blacks tortured and killed whites. Sometimes they shot them, sometimes they used bayonets, and other times they used the most horrible torture techniques. Blacks raped white women. They destroyed houses, plantations, and other property. Napoleon sent 45,000 troops to restore white rule, but they were wiped out by angry blacks and by diseases. It was the modern world's first genocide.

What was to stop the same sort of ethnic cleansing from playing out in America? Fear of that suppressed emancipation fever for almost 30 years. When abolitionists finally began to get their legs again, it started in Britain. But America was in the grip of rampant racism in the North. Northern states began passing black codes, prohibiting blacks from slave states from taking up residence among Yankees. Even in areas where blacks were allowed to live, they weren't allowed to go to the theater, be admitted to hospitals, or go to school. In Philadelphia, from 1820-1830, blacks died twice as fast as whites. Even the few abolitionists that were in the US didn't necessarily advocate full equality for blacks.

Another problem Americans faced was unique to the North. Since slavery was not practical there, Yankees found it much easier than the South to call for emancipation. In 1799 New York passed a law setting all children born to slaves (after July 4, 1799) free. Sounds fair and easy. But it wasn't. They soon realized that they had just significantly reduced the value of their slaves, because children were no longer part of the package. So, what did Yankees do? Did they accept that as the price of emancipation? Heck no. These were Yankees. No, they decided to just ship their slaves to the South to be auctioned off. In other words, the North contributed to Southern slavery. These days the North pretends they had nothing to do with the sins of slavery. That makes them liars and hypocrites. They contributed to Southern slavery in a number of ways.

Another uniquely Northern problem stemmed from the Emancipation Proclamation. A number of key Yankee military leaders let Lincoln know in no uncertain terms just how the soldiers felt about EP. One respected colonel stated: **Let it be understood that if this is a war for emancipation of the Negro, instead of a war**

**in defense of the Constitution, three quarters of the army would lay down their arms.** Not surprisingly, therefore, when Gen Fremont emancipated the slaves in the area of Missouri under his command, Lincoln chastised Fremont severely and reversed his decision. Eventually, however, Yankees began to catch on to the EP scam. They gradually realized that it didn't free a single slave, and it was never supposed to. It was just a *war measure* (as Lincoln called it), a *farce* as many Europeans called it, and a *lie* (as I call it). Its intent was to stir up slave uprisings in the South, probably resulting in the murder of many Southern women and children (which was great as far as Yankees were concerned). It also, Lincoln hoped, would result in a lot of Southern slaves leaving the plantations and flocking to the Union Army to help fight against their cruel former slave masters. However, those things did not happen. Slaves stayed on the plantation, working to produce food and provisions for the Southern war effort. EP was also designed to prevent European countries (England and France in particular) from joining the war on the side of the South. That part worked, except that the Secession Documents of the first wave of seceding states had already pretty much guaranteed no European nation would come to the South's aid and support.

Another uniquely American problem with emancipation was caused by abolitionists. It was illegal in the South to teach slaves to read and write. Why? In large part it was because Yankee abolitionists were smuggling tracts into the South that threatened the lives of Southern whites. It would have been suicidal to allow slaves to become literate only to see them enticed to slit the throat of their master. Abolitionist demands for immediate emancipation were also counterproductive. They obviously had not stopped to consider how that would impact the lives of freed slaves. They would have had no way to take care of themselves and no master to care for them. Hardly the best thing for slaves. Abolitionist fanaticism angered the South and guaranteed that there was no chance for the two regions to come to a practical solution to the slavery issue.

Although Lincoln was not an abolitionist, his EP originally included language calling for a violent uprising by slaves in the South. Blowback from more civilized thinkers forced Lincoln to delete that language from later drafts, but his radical thinking was enough to cause Europeans to seriously consider joining the war in support of the South. European countries did not want to be seen by the rest of the world as fighting for the cause of slavery, but they also couldn't just stand by and watch a massive human slaughter take place in the South. What Europeans and Yankees both failed to realize is that most slaves had no desire to leave the plantation or to harm their master. Southern whites couldn't be sure it would play out that way, especially if slaves were provoked and indoctrinated by Yankee abolitionists and Lincoln's EP.

When it did work out that way, Union soldiers in the South were astonished to find that slaves did not behave or think as expected. Yankees had a very misguided notion of what life in the South was really like, and when confronted with the reality of it, Yankees were mad. Union forces made a habit of swooping down on plantations and kidnapping slave men for forced and unpaid labor in the Union Army. They were still slaves in all but name. It was a common scene of women crying on the ground as their husbands and brothers were hauled away, never to be seen or heard from again. That left those families with no means of support. That was the Great Emancipator in action. For such crimes against humanity he gets a monument in the nation's capital.

Eventually, Yankees were desperate for anything that would help them win the war, even EP or the prospect of slave uprisings. Civilized thinking gave way to a frenzied campaign of Southern cultural genocide and sweet revenge. There was no longer even the pretense of trying to abide by international law or the Union's own code of military conduct. Yankees lost their ability to reason or to care about anything but what they wanted. If they wanted it, that made it right, and they used their military might to force their will on the South. Reason and even basic human decency be damned.

Finally, it is most revealing to compare the thinking of Abraham Lincoln and Robert E Lee on emancipation. Here, first, is Lincoln's philosophy.

Once, when asked what was to become of freed slaves, Lincoln answered with a little story about an Illinois pig farmer. The farmer told his neighbor that he had made a great discovery. He had found a way to cut the amount of time and labor devoted to food crops for his pigs, and it provided a way to feed the pigs even in winter. The neighbor was eager to learn the secret, so the pig farmer explained that it was just a matter of planting plenty of potatoes. There was no need to dig up the potatoes and store them. When they are mature, he just let the pigs run loose in the potato field and dig up the potatoes for themselves. But, the neighbor wondered, how could the pigs dig up the potatoes in winter when the ground is frozen? *Just let them root*, was the reply.

In other words, Lincoln wasn't concerned with how blacks might cope with sudden emancipation. Just let them figure it out. Or die trying. Either way, it didn't matter to Lincoln. It wasn't his problem, and he was not in the least inclined to make it his problem. Blacks just weren't worth the bother.

Contrast that with what Robert E Lee had to say:

**The best men in the South have long desired to do away with the institution [of slavery], and were quite willing to see it abolished. But with them in relation to this subject the question has been: what will you do with the freed people? That is a serious question today. Unless some humane course, based on wisdom and Christian principles, is adopted, you do them [slaves] a great injustice in setting them free.**

How can any reasonably intelligent person possibly believe that Lincoln was a great president, someone to be admired, revered, celebrated and emulated? How could we have any confidence in a Lincoln lover's intelligence, judgment, or veracity?