



## ABRAHAM LINCOLN QUOTES ABOUT SLAVERY

### Slavery and Morality

"In 1841 you and I had together a tedious low-water trip, on a Steam Boat from Louisville to St. Louis. You may remember, as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were, on board, ten or a dozen slaves, shackled together with irons. That sight was a continual torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any other slave-border." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume II, "Letter to Joshua F. Speed" (August 24, 1855) p. 320

"Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature - opposition to it, is 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." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume II, "Speech at Peoria, Illinois" (October 16, 1854), p. 271

"Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, can not long retain it." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume III, "Letter To Henry L. Pierce and Others" (April 6, 1858) p. 376

\* "I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any abolitionist." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume II, "Speech at Chicago, Illinois" (July 10, 1858), p. 492.

"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.

"I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think, and feel." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume VII, "Letter to Albert G. Hodges" (April 4, 1864), p. 281

"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. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just - a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless." Lincoln's Second Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862.

"Now, I confess myself as belonging to that class in the country who contemplate slavery as a moral, social and political evil, having due regard for its actual existence amongst us and the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way, and to all the constitutional obligations which have been thrown about it; but, nevertheless, desire a policy that looks to the prevention of it as a wrong, and looks hopefully to the time when as a wrong it may come to an end." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume III, "Lincoln-Douglas Debate at Galesburg" (October 7, 1858) p. 226

## **Slavery and American Democracy**

"I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume II, "Speech at Peoria, Illinois" (October 16, 1854), p. 255.

"We were proclaiming ourselves political hypocrites before the world, by thus fostering Human Slavery and proclaiming ourselves, at the same time, the sole friends of Human Freedom." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume II, "Speech at Springfield, Illinois" (October 4, 1854), p. 242.

"What I do say is, that no man is good enough to govern another man, without that other's consent. I say this is the leading principle - the sheet anchor of American republicanism." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume II, "Speech at Peoria, Illinois" (October 16, 1854), p. 266.

"As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume II, (August 1, 1858?), p. 532.

"I think that one of the causes of these repeated failures is that our best and greatest men have greatly underestimated the size of this question (slavery). They have constantly brought forward small cures for great sores---plasters too small to cover the wound. That is one reason that all settlements have proved so temporary---so evanescent." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume III, "Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio" (September 17, 1859), p. 15.

## **Slavery and Union**

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. 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. It will become all one thing or all the other." Lincoln's 'House-Divided' Speech in Springfield, Illinois, June 16, 1858.

"In the first place, I insist that our fathers did not make this nation half slave and half free, or part slave and part free. I insist that they found the institution of slavery existing here. They did not make it so, but they left it so because they knew of no way to get rid of it at that time." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume III, "Lincoln-Douglas Debate at Quincy" (October 13, 1858), p. 276.

"My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume V, "Letter to Horace Greeley" (August 22, 1862), p. 388.

## Slavery in the South vs. Slavery in the West

"We think slavery a great moral wrong, and while we do not claim the right to touch it where it exists, we wish to treat it as a wrong in the territories, where our votes will reach it." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler. Volume IV. "Speech at New Haven, Connecticut" (March 6, 1860) p. 16.

"I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Lincoln's First Inaugural Address. March 4, 1861

"I think slavery is wrong, morally, and politically. I desire that it should be no further spread in these United States, and I should not object if it should gradually terminate in the whole Union." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler. Volume III. "Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio" (September 17, 1859).

"I do not wish to be misunderstood upon this subject of slavery in this country. I suppose it may long exist, and perhaps the best way for it to come to an end peaceably is for it to exist for a length of time. But I say that the spread and strengthening and perpetuation of it is an entirely different proposition. There we should in every way resist it as a wrong, treating it as a wrong, with the fixed idea that it must and will come to an end." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler. Volume III, "Speech at Chicago, Illinois" (March 1, 1859). p. 370

"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." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler. Volume IV. "Letter to Alexander H. Stephens" (December 22, 1860). p. 160.

"I did say, at Chicago, in my speech there, that I do wish to see the spread of slavery arrested and to see it placed where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler. Volume II. "Speech at Springfield, Illinois" (July 17, 1858). p. 514.

"Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would, directly, or indirectly, interfere with their slaves, or with them, about their slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you, as once a friend, and still, I hope, not an enemy, that there is no cause for such fears." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler. Volume IV. "Letter to Alexander H. Stephens" (December 22, 1860). p. 160.

"I believe the declara[tion] that 'all men are created equal' is the great fundamental principle upon which our free institutions rest; that negro slavery is violative of that principle; but that, by our frame of government, that principle has not been made one of legal obligation; that by our frame of government, the States which have slavery are to retain it, or surrender it at their own pleasure; and that all others---individuals, free-states and national government--are constitutionally bound to leave them alone about it. I believe our government was thus framed because of the necessity springing from the actual presence of slavery, when it was framed. That such necessity does not exist in the territories[sic], where slavery is not present." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler. Volume III. "Letter to James N. Brown" (October 18, 1858). p. 327.

"I hold it to be a paramount duty of us in the free states, due to the Union of the states, and perhaps to liberty itself (paradox though it may seem) to let the slavery of the other states alone; while, on the other hand, I hold it to be equally clear, that we should never knowingly lend ourselves directly or indirectly, to prevent that slavery from dying a natural death---to find new places for it to live in, when it can no longer exist in the old." *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* edited by Roy P. Basler. Volume I. "Letter to Williamson Durley" (October 3, 1845). p. 348