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TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

THE NEGRO QUESTION: SLAVERY IN THE  
CONTEXT OF THE ANTEBELLUM AND CIVIL  
WAR AMERICA. CONFRONTING LINCOLN'S  
PERSPECTIVE THROUGH HIS OWN WORDS.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to give an insight into the historical period of America that goes from the decades prior to the Civil War (Antebellum period) until the war itself; focusing on the institution of slavery: its origins, evolution, life conditions of slaves, pro and anti-slavery movements along with relevant events and figures and; on the other hand, its connection to the figure of Abraham Lincoln appearing as the model, the symbol of the fight against slavery; the key figure concerning abolition. However, through the analysis of different historical documents as discourses, speeches or letters written by Lincoln himself I aim to illustrate how this conception is not completely true: he abolished slavery as a military and political instrument to end the war and maintain the integrity of the Union. His foremost concern was not equality between blacks and whites but to create a strong and united America.

**Keywords:** Slavery, Abraham Lincoln, American Civil War, abolition, emancipation, equality

El propósito de este trabajo es aportar una visión general sobre la historia americana; desde las décadas anteriores a la Guerra Civil hasta la guerra como tal, centrando la atención en la institución de la esclavitud: sus orígenes, evolución, condiciones de vida de los esclavos, movimientos a favor y en contra de la esclavitud junto con eventos y personajes relevantes. Asimismo, estudiar su conexión con la figura de Abraham Lincoln como modelo y símbolo de la lucha contra la esclavitud. Sin embargo, mediante el análisis de documentos históricos tales como discursos o cartas escritas por el propio Lincoln mi propósito es ilustrar como esta concepción no es completamente cierta: Lincoln empleó la abolición de la esclavitud como un instrumento político y militar para poner fin a la guerra y mantener la integridad de la Unión. Su mayor preocupación no era la igualdad racial sino crear una América fuerte y unida.

**Palabras clave:** Esclavitud, Abraham Lincoln, Guerra Civil Americana, abolición, emancipación, igualdad

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In human history, since the early days of the first civilizations as Mesopotamia or Egypt, slavery or the relationship established between master and servant has always existed in a way or another: an ancient way of slavery for instance is that of treating war prisoners as subjugated people; those who have been defeated and deserve to be treated as servants. Their fate is to serve the conquerors in any manner they command; usually as domestic servants, public servants or as labor force in the fields. They did not have the same rights as the masters, or rather they did not have any right. We can find a clear instance of this kind of slavery in ancient Roman Civilization: prisoners were turned into servants and treated as objects that could be sold and bought; as things or goods rather than human beings.

Seen that slavery is an inherent feature of human civilization and has always existed, we nowadays regard it as an abhorrent custom that should be eradicated since every human being should be free and have the same rights and freedom; no one should be submitted by other in any way. This is our thinking today but at those times, it was a practice, a custom as any other and was not bad regarded from the moral point of view. However, in this research paper I am not focusing on slavery as such within human history and that is why I am only going to offer this brief overview about this millennial custom. Instead, I aim to focus on the issue of slavery and its later abolishment after the *American Civil War* but filtering it through the figure of *Abraham Lincoln*, the so-called liberator of slaves or father of freedom and equality. Everyone thinks of him as a man ahead of his time in this regard; the key figure that made it possible for slaves to achieve freedom, a man fighting fiercely for what he thought was morally right but I aim to clarify that although the history we have been told says it was so, it is not less true that if he freed slaves it was with a political target in mind; he did it as a political instrument to keep the Union together and as a military and economic strike to the Confederates during the War.

We are going to see how, through the analysis of historical events and writings (some of them speeches or letters written by Lincoln himself), how this conception of Lincoln as an almost mythical and legendary figure regarding freedom loses its bright when confronted to the actual truth of why he did what he did.

It cannot be argued that he is a crucial figure in American history but history has to be interpreted objectively and what I aim to do is demystify the figure of Abraham Lincoln as liberator and savior of slaves, and shed light on the fact that he acted according to political purposes and using the issue of slavery as a way to keep the nation united in the dark times of the Civil War.

To tackle the issue of slavery, the first part of the paper will consist on a historical and cultural contextualization of the America prior to the Civil War: from the early times of slavery, through the pro and anti-slavery movement and the causes that led to the War. This background will serve to understand the political position of Abraham Lincoln and his approach towards slavery; to get to know his mentality, it is crucial to know how was the America he encountered when he became president.

Afterwards, the second main point of the paper will be an examination of historical documents linked to Lincoln's time; analyzed in order to give an insight of the abolitionist process and what was the truth behind it.

## **2. EARLY SLAVERY TIMES**

### **2.1 Brief account of the origins of slavery in America:**

Slavery in America dates back to the time when there was a shortage of labor force to work the fields and attend the crops and slaves coming from Africa were brought by Dutch colonizers with the aim to ease the working conditions. When first European settlers set in North America and created the colonies, the land was vast and there was a huge work to do to extract benefits from the soil. This is why; as African slaves were physically fit to endure hard labor, they were seen as a solution to the labor force shortage. The arrival of the first Dutch ship loaded with African slaves to the colony of Jamestown, Virginia dates back to 1619. What settlers wanted was to improve the exploitation of lucrative crops such as cotton or tobacco.

As stated in (History: Slavery in America): “The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 solidified the central importance of slavery to the South’s economy.” Cotton plantations became the major economic activity in the South and because of this, slavery became progressively less important and profitable in the North (due to the increasing relevance of industry and manufacturing) but crucial to the South’s economy.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, slaves worked mainly on coastal plantations in the south and during the American War of Independence (1775-1783) groups of colonists; mainly in the North (where slavery was losing importance), began to relate slave’s oppression to the British oppression: this was the seed of the calling for slavery abolition. After the Independence, the Constitution acknowledged the institution of slavery and treated each slave as three-fifths of a person when it came to taxation and representation in the Congress.

Therefore; southern slave-holders, seeing the profits obtained through slavery defended the institution fiercely since it was the basis of their economy. They considered black slaves as inferior and incapable of caring for themselves. They used this excuse to argue that slavery was a benevolent act towards them; since they were fed, clothed and given work. However, given its moral implications, voices of abolition raised as for instance, the rejection of slavery by the editor William Lloyd Garrison, the personal experience as an escaped slave of Frederick Douglass or the novel written in 1852 by Harriet Beecher Stowe: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. All these accounts of the suffering of slaves and the cruelty of masters helped in raising the abolitionist movement.

## **2.2 Slaves, slaveholders & life conditions**

In the pre-Civil War South, around one-third of the population was composed of slaves. They used to live on farms or plantations dominated by a master. They were deprived from education; they were not allowed to learn how to write or read since knowledge could lead to rebellion. They had a hierarchical system (from privileged domestic slaves to field workers) that helped to prevent them from organize and fight for their rights.

House slaves were treated better than field slaves; they were given more food and spare family clothes. Their tasks ranged from cooking, cleaning, washing...however; although their work was hard and difficult, it was less exhausting than working the plantations. On the other hand, field slaves were forced to work from sun to sun enduring physical and moral punishments by masters, who sought young, strong, healthy men who could labor more and increase the production.

Frederick Douglass wrote about slave conditions in his autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. Regarding working conditions, he wrote that:

We worked in all weathers. It was never too hot or too cold [...] Work, work, work, was scarcely more the order of the day than of the night. [...] I was somewhat unmanageable when I first went there, but a few months of this discipline tamed me. (Douglass, 1997: 45)

Regarding feeding, slaves were given a monthly amount of food to keep them strong to work but only the indispensable: corn meal, salt-herrings and sometimes some pork or fish. As to clothing, they received a yearly allowance. Frederick Douglass describes that he was given: “two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers, like the shirts, one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter, made of coarse negro cloth, one pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes”. (Douglass, 1997: 17)

Besides the hard life conditions, slaves also had to endure physical punishments and vexations since law did not protect them. When slaves did something wrong: absence from work, theft or attempt of escape the most common punishments were: whipping, breaking of limbs or confinement in a hole; all of them instances of the cruelty and moral decadency of slave-holders. Masters also used to threat slaves to work harder and increase productivity. Moreover, slave rebellions were harshly punished and these rebellions were used as an example by slaveholders to show that slaves were barbarians that needed discipline.

### **2.3 Rise of the abolitionist movement:**

From the 1830's to the 1860's many voices claiming against the moral degradation of slavery defended that it was a sin that had to be eradicated. It was essentially in the north where this movement was originated, since slavery was less important from the economic point of view. It was triggered by accounts of the cruelty and repression against slaves made by former slaves themselves, as for instance, and as stated before Frederick Douglass. His personal experience opened the eyes of white abolitionists of the need of eliminate this practice. He was an example of a slave that succeeded to escape and educate himself. Other influential abolitionists were William Lloyd Garrison; founder of the radical newspaper *The Liberator* and Harriet Beecher Stowe; who dramatizes the hard situation of slaves as a social critic against slavery.

Groups of abolitionists began acting aside the law helping southern slaves to escape using safe houses. This practice was called the "*Underground Railroad*" and it is believed that it helped around 50.000 to 100.000 slaves to escape. The success of this enterprise helped to spread the anti-slavery feeling and conviction throughout the North. However, it was also a source of tension and violence between southern pro-slavery supporters and northern anti-slavery supporters.

### **2.4 Historical documents: Declaration of Independence (1776) and the deleted passage dealing with slavery**

Although in the *Declaration of Independence* the main aim was to set the basis of the new nation stating the sovereignty of the thirteen states that rebelled against British dominance, there was a debate over slavery and it is shown in the deleted paragraph about slavery that Thomas Jefferson eliminated from his preliminary draft of the document.

It was a condemnation of the slave trade that flourished under the British rule; written in order to state that America should not follow this example for being considered a practice against morality. However, it was rejected by the Continental Congress since slavery was crucial for economy. Therefore, in my opinion, it seems that money and economic interests are stronger than morality.

The fragment says as follows:

[...] he [the king of Britain] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, [...] the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold. (Jefferson, 1776)

In the process of revising the draft before signing it, the elimination of this passage was the most relevant event; it was an early attempt to abolish slavery but, as it was the basis of the colonies' economy and there were higher interests involved, it was erased.

It became a moral debate since they were conscious that slavery was necessary to preserve the plantation system but they also knew that with the Declaration what they were defending was freedom and liberty for everyone. Therefore, there was a moral clash but at the end, over the struggle to achieve human rights, the economic aspect prevailed.

The document and all that surrounds its creation is full of contradictions. For instance, it said nothing regarding the abolishment of slavery but the second paragraph states: "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." (Jefferson, 1776)

Therefore, if the basis of the nation is set upon freedom and equality...how is it possible that they did not fight for the end of slavery? In addition, although Jefferson himself was supposedly against slavery, he owned slaves for his personal wellbeing.

### **3. PRE-CIVIL WAR AMERICA: THE “ANTEBELLUM” PERIOD**

It is the historical period that ranges from the adoption of the Constitution (1789) until the outbreak of the Civil War. This period was highlighted by the rising positioning and tension between abolitionists and supporters of slavery. From the economic point of view, in the North the effects of the *Industrial Revolution* (rise of textile manufacturing industry) began a process of shift from agriculture and the working on the fields and plantations to manufacturing and factories; along with the movement of population from the countryside to cities, as peasants wanted to escape from the misery and toil of working the fields seeking a better future. On the other hand, South's economy continued to be based on plantations worked by slaves; as the demand of cotton and other crops from the north and from England increased. It was a profitable business as slaves were a cheap labor force that did not receive any wage. Therefore, it was understandable that plantation owners disregarded the pro-abolishment movement and defended slavery as the centerpiece of their way of living.

#### **3.1 Pre-Civil War slave rebellions**

Although slaves were bonded and tied to the land and had to resist abuses from masters, they tried to keep their traditions and their origins but always surreptitiously fearing the retaliation. They rebelled by working slower than the usual, damaging working tools, practicing in secret their religious beliefs...These instances of rebellion sometimes were further and there existed some cases of trying to escape. They were willing to risk everything; even their own lives, for the promise of freedom.

However, the cruelty of the repressions and punishments against those who tried to escape spread the fear among the ones planning to escape. Although most attempts to escape failed, those who made it set an example of fighting for freedom and spread this feeling among slaves. It also encouraged abolitionists to persist in their idea that slavery was something that must be eliminated.

### **3.2 Pro-slavery movement**

Against the moral claims of abolitionists seeking to destroy the practice of slavery considering it a step backwards in the achievement of freedom and equality, the defenders of slavery (those who considered blacks inferior by nature and those who benefit from their use as working hand) sought to justify its necessity.

Advocates of slavery used a variety of arguments to convince people of the benefits of slavery. Those arguments varied from the supposed superiority of the white race over the black both intellectually and morally, the religious argument saying that it was God's command for whites to educate blacks or the purely economic argument of the profits of slavery. One of the main arguments claimed for by pro-slavery advocates was that of the master as a paternal figure; slaves are lost and un-civilized and they need a guiding hand, someone to feed them and teach them. It was depicted as a benevolent act of piety when it was actually a cruel form of depriving human beings of their freedom. Within the economic argument, they argued that the end of slavery would cause the collapse of the South's economy and this would lead to unemployment, social uprisings and shortage.

One of the key figures in the defense of slavery was Henry James Hammond; who in his *Mudsill Speech* (1858) originated the Mudsill theory: "a sociological term indicating the proposition that there must be, and always has been, a lower class for the upper classes to rest upon, like mudsill supporting the foundations of a building." (The Proslavery Argument – The Old South)

### **3.3 Abolitionist movement**

Abolitionists claimed that according to the Constitution, America was founded as a nation that defended freedom and believed that (Declaration of Independence, 1776: 1) "*all men are created equal*". Therefore, they considered that slavery was a violation of the very basis of their homeland and consequently, it must be eliminated for America to become the nation that the founding fathers desired it to be: a nation marked by equality and freedom.

The rise of the abolitionist movement was considered to be one of the main factors that triggered the social and political breach between north and south that ultimately led to the war. When talking about the abolitionist movement, we should make a distinction between *abolitionists*; who claimed for the immediate and complete liberation of slaves, *anti-slavery advocates*; who defended not a radical but a gradual process of abolition and *free-soil activists*; who wanted to prevent slavery expansion and limit it to certain areas. Southern slavery supporters saw movements towards abolition as a threat to their way of living and this helped to increase the animosity between the two regions.

In 1833 the *American Anti-Slavery Society* was founded and its first convention was convened in Philadelphia led by abolitionists as the *Tappan Brothers* (Arthur and Lewis) and William Lloyd Garrison; founder of *The Liberator*: one of the most famous and influential abolitionist newspapers. He condemned slavery for contradicting the principles of freedom and equality in which the country was founded. In 1854; in his speech *No Compromise with the evil of slavery*, Garrison said:

I am a believer in that portion of the Declaration of American Independence in which it is set forth, as among self-evident truths, "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Hence, I am an abolitionist. Hence, I cannot but regard oppression in every form – and most of all, that which turns a man into a thing – with indignation and abhorrence. (Lloyd Garrison, 1854)

The society denounced slavery as a sin that must be abolished and claimed against racial prejudices and for freedom and equality. Their aim was to spread antislavery beliefs using oral transmission, literature (newspapers, pamphlets) or any written critic towards slavery.

However, and although abolitionists coincided in their denunciation of slavery as an evil, they disagreed among themselves as to how their aim might be best reached. Garrison and Garrisonians believed in moral suasion as the main weapon against slavery. They also believed that women should be allowed to participate completely in antislavery societies. However, other antislavery supporters (led by the Tappan brothers) were more conservative regarding women rights and finally, they withdrew and created the *American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society*.

### **3.4 Anti-slavery organizations: The Underground Railroad**

It is believed that the system began in 1787, when a Quaker called Isaac T. Hopper ideated a system to help fugitive slaves to escape. Abolitionists used their own homes as safe places (stations) to hide slaves. The system was also based on the figure of *conductors*; those who went to the South risking their own life to guide the slaves through safe paths since slave owners used to offer important sums of money as reward for their capture.

Plantation owners were concerned with this issue as they were losing working force and using their influence they managed to convince the Congress to pass in 1850 the *Fugitive Slave Act*: “People suspected of being a runaway slave could be arrested without warrant and turned over to a claimant on nothing more than his sworn testimony of ownership. Any person aiding a runaway slave by providing shelter, food or any other form of assistance was liable to six months' imprisonment and a \$1,000 fine.”

However, despite this law and the pressures against the system, the Underground Railroad never stopped to act and help to save slaves.

### **3.5 Relevant literary figures within the abolitionist movement:**

#### 3.5.1 Frederick Douglass (1818-1895)

One of the most influential figures among black abolitionists. He proved that blacks could be intellectually equal since he learnt himself how to read and write and he even wrote his own experience as a submitted slave and the suffering he went through until he managed to escape. His direct, first person narrative of the actual life conditions of a slave made abolitionists realize the injustice that was being made towards slaves. An account like his was something necessary to open the eyes of people as it made them feel closer to the suffering of slaves. He set an example of how slaves not only could but should be treated as equals.

He also worked as lecturer in behalf of the American Anti-Slavery Society giving speeches about his years as a slave, the abuses committed by slave-holders and the necessity of equality between races. The society helped him to publish his aforesaid autobiography: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845); through which he became a symbol of black resistance.

### 3.5.2 Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)

Author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; novel written in 1852 that depicted openly and dramatically the misery of South's slaves and their strive to survive along with their hopes of escaping and achieving a better life. Its melodramatic and crude descriptions helped to increase the sentiment that slavery was a moral evil. She wrote:

The object of these sketches is to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race, as they exist among us; to show their wrongs and sorrows, under a system so necessarily cruel and unjust as to defeat and do away with the good effects of all that can be attempted for them by their best friends. (Beecher Stowe, 1965: XXVII)

It became the most effective propaganda for the anti-slavery movement as it spread consciousness of the necessity of abolishing slavery. It is considered as one of the most powerful claims ever made against slavery. On the other hand, supporters of slavery were furious since they saw that its influence was rising public sympathies towards slaves and depicting them as cruel and merciless people who were subjugating human beings on their own benefit.

## **3.6 Important historical events concerning abolitionism**

### 3.6.1 Missouri Compromise (1820)

It was passed in an effort to preserve the balance in Congress between slave and free states. It admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. It also banned slavery in Louisiana north of the 36° 30' latitude line. In 1854, it was repealed by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. This compromise aimed to decrease the political rivalry between free and slave states regarding the issue of limiting or expanding slavery.

However, it was criticized by both; northerners and southerners. The former claimed that the Congress was acquiescing in the expansion of slavery whereas the latter thought that this set an example of how the Congress had the ability of passing laws concerning slavery and this could ultimately lead to the abolition of slavery.

### 3.6.2 Wilmot Proviso (1846)

In the context of the *Mexican-American War* (1846-1848), in which America claimed the sovereignty over the territory of Texas while Mexico considered it part of his territory, the president James K. Polk requested an amount of 2 million dollars to ease the negotiations of a treaty; however, fearing the creation of a new pro-slavery territory (since the Congress was dominated by southerners), the congressman David Wilmot proposed an amendment to the bill: that slavery would be banned in the new territories acquired in the War as a measure to avoid further expansion of slavery.

The proposal passed the House of Representatives but was rejected by the Senate. Therefore; and although the Wilmot Proviso failed on achieving its target, it had important political repercussions since it created great bitterness between North and South and helped crystallize the conflict over the extension or abolition of slavery.

### 3.6.3 Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854)

The Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed on May 30, 1854. It allowed people in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide for themselves (popular sovereignty) whether or not to allow slavery within their borders. The Act served to repeal the Missouri Compromise and as a result, abolitionists were furious as they considered that as stated in the Compromise, slavery would have been outlawed in both territories.

Both anti and pro slavery supporters rushed to settle in Kansas with the purpose of controlling the result of the elections and decide through legislation whether to prohibit or defend slavery. Voters were mainly Missouri slave-owners who wanted to make sure that pro-slavery candidates were elected.

Therefore, slavery was maintained and laws punishing those who helped slaves to escape were passed. All this made tension between North and South to increase and make the differences almost irreconcilable.

#### 3.6.4 Dred Scott Decision (1857)

Dred Scott was an African-American slave of the slave state of Missouri but he lived for a long period of time in the free state of Wisconsin. When his master died he; helped by abolitionist lawyers, asked for his freedom on court claiming that he had lived on free soil for a long time. The case passed to the Supreme Court and it was decided that slaves or descendants of slaves were not U.S citizens and therefore could not sue in Federal courts. Scott was forced to remain being a slave and this helped to increase discomfort among abolishment supporters since it was seen as a step closer to defend the expansion of slavery instead of limiting it.

### **3.7 Religious abolitionism:**

Religion always played an important role within the abolitionist movements that rose during the decades prior to the Civil War. Although the Bible did not condemn directly slavery, moral teachings said that all men should be treated equally and no man should be subjected to the desires of others.

Taking these Christian values into account, religious groups as Protestants or Evangelists based their claims in favor of abolition on the sin that slavery represented for humanity and the need to achieve equality to progress towards salvation and redemption. This religious outbreak of faith and piety; known as the *Second Great Awakening*, also influenced the politic and social abolitionist movements and helped them to have a moral background to support their vindications.

Within the religious abolitionist movement, one of the most active groups regarding the fight against slavery was the community of *Quakers*; they actively defended equality as a religious and moral obligation and openly denounced and criticized slavery and slave-owners stating that it was against the nature of human being.

They based themselves on radical pietism and defended the love of God for every human being regardless color, sex or social status.

#### **4. THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA**

The Confederacy was established in February, 1861; only a few months after the election of Lincoln, when seven slave states decided to secede from the Union to preserve their way of living (based on slavery) seeing that Lincoln and the Republican Party were seeking to abolish it. Its foundation is depicted in (History: Confederate States of America – American Civil War):

Convinced that their way of life, based on slavery, was irretrievably threatened by the election of President Abraham Lincoln (November 1860), the seven states of the Deep South (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas) seceded from the Union during the following months. When the war began with the firing on Fort Sumter (April 12, 1861), they were joined by four states of the upper South (Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia).

Led by their elected president Jefferson Davis, the Confederacy wanted a peaceful division trying to avoid war but the Union aimed to preserve the unity of the nation although this meant war. Seeing that peace was impossible, war was declared after the attack to *Fort Sumter*. The Civil War was the bloodiest military conflict in the U.S history with more than 600.000 casualties; it lasted 4 years and ended up with the victory of the Union, and the abolishment of slavery.

Several citizens of the Southern states felt more Southerners than Americans; they defended their traditions and their economic system based on slavery; they considered that they had their own culture, society and history and that it was different from the rest of the nation. They felt pride of being southerners and would fight for their rights until the last drop of blood. This regional sentiment of belonging was known as the "*Southern Cause*." The Confederate government set its capital in Montgomery, Alabama and Davis along with its office wrote the *Confederate States Constitution* (which was never accepted and considered illegal by the Union). It was based on the U.S original Constitution but included clauses and protections towards slavery; for instance, it allowed slave trade within the seceded states.

The executive power was in the hands of the President and the Vice-President (Alexander Stephens). Within the organization of the administration there were also secretaries in charge of different areas of the government: secretary of State, of the Treasury, of War...On the other hand, the legislative power was held by both, the President and the elected Confederate Congress; comprising delegates of the seceded states.

However, the Confederacy was never economically and militarily strong enough to defeat the Union due to its dependence on an outdated and antiquated economic system. Moreover, the late development of new techniques brought by Industrial Revolution made the South an area marked by poverty and shortage. Plantations were the main source of wealth and exportations of cotton, tobacco and other crops were the economic basis but due to the Union blockage during the war, trade was dramatically reduced and this, added to war costs meant the ruin of the South. As a consequence of financial problems, taxes increased and this increased popular discomfort since farmers had to contribute with one-tenth of their annual crop yield.

From the military point of view and because of the high number of casualties and the low number of trained soldiers, the Confederate Government approved a law of conscription or obligatory enlistment of all white men between eighteen and thirty-five. This measure was necessary to resist Unionist advance but as a result, the Confederate army was composed of unexperienced, untrained citizens that were not proper soldiers. This was a clear drawback when Civil War became an attrition conflict in which supplies and reinforcements were crucial. The surprise was is not that they lost the war but that they persisted for four arduous years.

#### **4.1 Causes of secession:**

Primarily, the growing tension North – South regarding the abolishment of slavery and the defense of its maintenance by slaveholders since it was the basis of their economy. The spark that ignited the process of secession was the electoral victory of the Republican Party (mostly antislavery supporters) personified by Abraham Lincoln.

Northerners hated slavery and all it represented whereas Southerners felt slavery as a natural condition since they considered that slaves were inferior. This contradiction was something impossible to overcome.

Among other causes were that southerners considered government was favoring the economic growing and interests of the North over the South and felt as being treated as "second class" citizens. There was also an everlasting quarrel between North and South about the issue of the "*State's rights*"; South claimed that states should be sovereign and not subjected to a central government whereas North held that states were subordinated to the U.S constitution and part of a unified nation.

## 5. THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

### 5.1 Causes of the War:

The Civil War was the final crystallization of all the tension and conflicts that had been accumulated between the North and the South throughout the decades prior to the outbreak of the armed hostilities. This tension had its origin in the different nature and development of both regions: after the Revolutionary War, most northern states progressively abolished slavery whereas in southern states it grew and flourished as key to their economy. Therefore, the debate over slavery and the widening gap between free and slave states was one of the more prominent triggering events of the War.

Moreover; culture, society, political beliefs, traditions...were very different in both regions. North was more open-minded and innovative while South was more conservative, traditional and rooted in the past.

However, there were other causes that influenced over the secession of the slave states as the rise and spread of the abolitionist movement and the pressures upon South to eliminate slavery. Instances of figures, institutions and events within the fight against slavery can be displayed: William Lloyd Garrison and The American Anti-Slavery Society, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, The Underground Railroad, The Missouri Compromise, The Kansas-Nebraska Act, The Dred Scott Decision, The Wilmot Proviso...

## 5.2 Summary of the American Civil War (1861-1865)

American Civil War was the bloodiest armed conflict in the history of the U.S and faced the Union against the Confederate States; the former aiming at maintaining the nation united under a strong and centralized government and the latter aiming to achieve the independence and international recognition of the slave states. As stated in (Civil War Trust: A Brief Overview of the American Civil War):

The war resolved two fundamental questions left unresolved by the revolution: whether the United States was to be a dissolvable confederation of sovereign states or an indivisible nation with a sovereign national government; and whether this nation, born of a declaration that all men were created with an equal right to liberty, would continue to exist as the largest slaveholding country in the world.

After the defeat of the Confederacy and the publication of the **13<sup>th</sup> amendment**; slavery was finally abolished in America, which constituted as a united nation rather than a collection of independent states. This possible division of the nation was what Abraham Lincoln feared most and this is why he refused to recognize the legitimacy of the secession.

War began on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1861 when the Confederate army claimed that the *Fort Sumter* (Charleston, South Carolina) was their property and demanded its surrender. The garrison refused and the Confederates opened fire. Lincoln's response was the calling of Unionist soldiers to arms to suppress the insurrection.

After some minor skirmishes between both armies, the first important battle of the war took place on July 21, 1861 on the hills around Bull Run creek (Virginia). The battle was known as the *First Battle of Bull Run* or *First Battle of Manassas*. At first, the Unionists advanced but the Confederates received reinforcements that made Union soldiers retreat towards Washington. The hopes of a short, bloodless war and a rapid Union victory vanished given the strength and endurance of Confederates.

In 1862, *General Robert E. Lee* took command of the Confederate army and decided to advance over the North splitting his forces in two: one section; under the orders of *Stonewall Jackson* attacked the Union forces in the *Second Battle of Bull Run* while the next day Lee himself appeared forcing Union forces (led by George B. McClellan) to retreat. However, he was able to reorganize his forces and pushed Confederates back to defensive positions in Antietam. On September 17, 1862 the bloodiest day of fighting in the war took place in the *Battle of Antietam*. Casualties were around 12.500 on the Union side and 14.000 on the Confederate side. This battle was crucial, since it held back Confederate advance upon the North and forced Lee to retreat to Virginia. After the battle, Lincoln issued the preliminary version of the **Emancipation Proclamation**; which freed slaves in the seceded states.

The tide of the war shifted in favor of the Union in 1863. On July 1; and after three days of bitter struggle, Union forces defeated Confederates near *Gettysburg*. However, Lee and part of his army were able to escape to Virginia. In July Union forces under the command of *Ulysses S. Grant* conquered Vicksburg (Mississippi) and at the end of 1863 Lincoln gave Grant the command of a reinforced army that obtained a great victory in *Chattanooga* (Tennessee).

In March 1864, Lincoln gave Grant the supreme command of the Union army. Grant decided to advance from Washington towards northern Virginia commanding the *Army of the Potomac* (the major Union army in the Eastern Theater during the war) pushing Lee's troops back.

The first important battle of 1864 was the known as *Battle of the Wilderness*; Grant wanted to advance over the Confederate capital of Richmond but Lee regrouped his troops in the dense woods known as Wilderness trying to use the steep terrain to make the Union advance more difficult. After two days of bloody combats and given the impossibility to advance, Grant ordered a tactical retreat but only to regroup and strike back. After this battle, Grant advanced over *Petersburg* (a key rail center for Confederate supplies) and sieged the city using trenches warfare and attrition.

On the other hand, the Unionist General *William Tecumseh Sherman* conquered the strategic city of Atlanta and began the famous “*March to the Sea*”; a campaign aimed at taking the port city of Savannah. Sherman conquered Savannah on December 21 and after this key victory, Columbia and South Carolina had fallen to the Union by February 1865.

Seeing the relentless advance of the Union, Jefferson Davis gave full command of the Confederate forces to Lee but it was too late to turn the tide of the war. The Confederates were exhausted after months of siege in Petersburg.

With the Union pressing over Richmond, Lee evacuated his forces during the night of the 2-3 April. Union forces pursued Confederates in their retreat along the Appomattox River and finally, Lee surrendered to Grant at *Appomattox Court House* on April 9. The war was virtually over but it was not until the last Confederate General (Joseph E. Johnston) surrendered to Sherman at *Durham Station* (North Carolina) on April 26 that the war effectively reached its end.

## **6. ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1809-1865)**

Sixteenth President of the United States; known for being in the presidency during the Civil War (1861-1865) and for the abolishment of slavery after the passing of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment. He has been always considered as one of the most relevant; if not the most, presidents of the U.S since he was able to maintain the unity of the nation in the rough times of war. He was an example of a “self-made” man; a man who came from a humble origin and through his personal struggle and perseverance achieved the highest office in the nation. A man who believed on democracy and gave his own life to preserve the nation.

Lincoln was born in Kentucky, son of a frontiersman, and had to strive to live and learn. In his letter *To Jesse W. Fell, Enclosing Autobiography* (Basler, 1953: Volume III, 511) he wrote: “I was born Feb. 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. [...] There I grew up. Of course when I came of age I did not know much. Still somehow, I could read, write, and cipher ... but that was all.”

He made extraordinary efforts to educate himself through reading since his family was too humble to provide him with a proper education.

When his family migrated to Illinois, he had to work to survive: he spent time working as shopkeeper or postmaster. He then began his political career being elected to the Illinois state legislature in 1834 as member of the Whig Party.

By this time he also decided to become a lawyer (he had taught himself by reading a book titled *Commentaries on the Laws of England*). He moved to Springfield and began acting as lawyer while continuing with his political ascent.

In 1842 he married Marie Todd; an educated woman from a distinguished Kentucky family, with whom he had four children. After the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) and the rise of the Republican Party, he joined the party and in 1858 he debated against *Stephen Douglas* for senator. Although he lost, his speeches gave him political reputation and in 1860, he was nominated as Republican candidate to the presidency. He had a moderate view of slavery; he was against its expansion and for slave rights but he did not think that blacks were equal to whites.

After his election in November, 1860 and before he took office in March, 1861 the Confederate States were founded and the Civil War began. He governed during the war always with the objective in mind of keeping the Union together and due to the victories and advances made in 1864, he was re-elected as president. In 1863, after the Battle of Antietam he issued the *Emancipation Proclamation*, freeing all slaves in the rebellious states. When the war was near to its end, he defended a peaceful reconstruction; marked by a politic of non-retaliation and mercy regarding the South, with the aim of bringing back the seceded states to the Union.

However, all the plans he had made for the future of America were truncated when on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, 1865 an actor named *John Wilkes Booth*; supporter of the Southern cause and obsessed with avenging the lost cause of the Confederates, shot him in the Ford's Theatre during a representation of *Our American Cousin* while he pronounced the Latin phrase "*Sic semper tyrannis*".

He stayed in coma for nine hours but he finally died the next morning. From that moment, the man died but the legend and the myth was born. He became a martyr of the Union cause and a symbol of the fight for freedom and equality. Abraham Lincoln; at a time when the future of the nation was at risk and during a historical period of deep social and political change, remained firm and guided America towards peace.

**7. LINCOLN'S VIEW ON SLAVERY: DOCUMENTARY PORTRAIT THROUGH HIS SPEECHES, LETTERS AND WRITINGS. CHALLENGING HIS TRADITIONAL VIEW AS LIBERATOR OF SLAVES ANALYZING HIS OWN WORDS**

Lincoln has been always considered by history as the embodiment of the fight against slavery but, although he might be morally against it and consider it as something cruel and unjust, he always put in the first place the unity of the country over the rights of slaves to be free. He was a pragmatic politician and if it was necessary to issue an Emancipation Proclamation to weaken the Confederate positions and strengthen the Union, he did not doubt a second. He would have done anything for the wellbeing of the Union and slavery should not interfere with it. He believed in the right of slaves to be free but he did not believe that blacks were equal to whites. He was an abolitionist but just because circumstances forced him to act as so.

Abolition would make him admired and beloved within abolitionists and, besides, would eliminate the main economic supporting point of the Confederacy; which meant an advance towards their capitulation and a step closer to restore unity.

He knew that concerning the issue of slavery he had to yield to what was better for America. Abolition was simply another political ace up in his sleeve to use for maintaining the nation united. He devoted his entire life to his country and that was above all; he was willing to sacrifice whatever it took to fulfill his duty as president.

Through the analysis of some of the most relevant speeches delivered and letters written by Lincoln himself, I aim to shed light upon this matter: whether he was a true, convinced abolitionist or rather if he used abolition and the Negro question as a political and military strategy to end the war and keep the nation together.

## **7.1 SPEECHES BEFORE HIS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT (1854-1861)**

### 7.1.1 The Kansas-Nebraska Act: Speech at Peoria, Illinois; October 16, 1854

This declared indifference, but as I must think, covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. 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---enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites---causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty---criticizing the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest. (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 71)

In this fragment we can see how Lincoln attacks the institution of slavery for being unjust and for going against the nature of America itself; based on freedom. He hates it since it challenges the basis of the Republican Party and what he wants is to gain the vote of people contrary to slavery for future elections.

I think I have no prejudice against the Southern people. They are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not now exist amongst them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist amongst us, we should not instantly give it up. (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 71)

He does not critic southerners who defend slavery since he understands that it is crucial for them so, it appears as if he wanted to maintain a status quo between north and south fearing future conflicts. He advocates for the end of slavery but gradually and avoiding violence; it is an instance of his political wisdom: he positions himself within abolitionists but at the same time, he does not attack slaveholders openly to avoid problems.

7.1.2 The central idea of the Republic: Speech at a republican banquet in Chicago;  
December 10, 1856

That “Central idea” in our political public opinion at the beginning was, and until recently has continued to be, “the equality of men.” And although it was always submitted patiently to whatever of inequality there seemed to be as matter of actual necessity, its constant working has been a steady progress towards the practical equality of all men. (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 86)

In this speech, he states the basis of the Republican Party (equality; all men are equal); therefore, he is both trying to gain the sympathy of anti-slavery supporters and criticizing those who defend slavery.

Let past differences, as nothing be; and with steady eye on the real issue, let us reinaugurate the good old “Central ideas” of the Republic. We *can* do it. The human heart *is* with us— God is with us. We shall again be able not to declare, that “all States as States, are equal,” nor yet that “all citizens as citizens are equal,” but to renew the broader, better declaration, including both these and much more, that “all men are created equal.” (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 86)

This fragment shows the religious basis of the claim against slavery (“God is with us”); the religious argument saying that slavery was a moral evil was widely used by slavery detractors. It is again a statement of how republicans are eager to fight for equality and consequently the end of slavery.

7.1.3 House Divided Speech: Springfield, Illinois; June 16, 1858

"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.

Either the opponents of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new -- North as well as South. (Basler, 1953: Volume II, 462)

In this speech, Lincoln introduces one of his main concerns regarding the rising tension between north and south due to slavery: he wants the nation to be united and to be strong under a single government (“I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall”); he does not care that much about slavery, he cares about the persistence of the Union and the struggle for America not to be segregated.

He considers this as more important than the question if slavery should be eliminated or rather maintained. He advocates for reaching a common solution: whether to abolish it or to expand it to all states but avoiding conflicts and keeping America together. Therefore, we can see that what before was a direct attack to slavery now turns into a speech focused on the unity of the nation regardless of the situation of slaves.

#### 7.1.4 The Negro Question: Extracts from the Lincoln – Douglas Debates; August to October, 1858

The Lincoln – Douglas debates were a series of political debates held during the campaign before the elections to the Senate between the two candidates to the Senate in Illinois; Abraham Lincoln (republican candidate) and Stephen Douglas (democratic candidate).

#### **Lincoln at Ottawa**

Anything that argues me into this idea of perfect social and political equality with the negro, is but a specious and fantastic arrangement of words. [...] I will say here, while upon this subject, 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. 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 am in favor of the race to which I belong, having the superior position. [...] I agree with Judge Douglas he (the negro) is not my equal in many aspects – certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment. (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 105)

In this case, a clear change of tone in the discourse of Lincoln can be appreciated. From positioning himself against slavery and among the abolitionist movement claiming for the equality of all men towards acknowledging that blacks are inferior. He says that his aim is not to “interfere with the institution of slavery”; therefore, his attitude can be seen as somehow contradictory and even cynical since he seems not to support abolition but rather to think as those who support slavery: he claims that there is a physical difference between both races that makes it impossible for them to coexist in equal conditions.

If he had defended equality among all human beings in previous speeches...how can he now argue that the negro is not his equal not morally neither intellectually and that given that difference the white race is superior? It is a clear contradiction that reflects how things were not exactly as we have always been told by history regarding the relation between Lincoln and slavery.

### **Lincoln at Charleston**

I will say then that I am not, nor even have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, that I am not nor even have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. [...] there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race. (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 106)

Here, he repeats some key aspects also found in the previous excerpt: blacks and whites are not equal, the difference among them forbids them to live together and finally the idea that there is a position of superior and inferior race and he prefers to have the superiority that the white race has.

When reading this, the traditional image of Lincoln as model of abolitionism, as symbol of the fight against inequality crumbles into pieces. He appears as a rather racist person since he considers that “he has never been in favor of social and political equality between both races” and he also rejects the idea of allowing black people to vote, to hold important public employments or even to marry with a white person: “nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people”.

Through his own words we get the idea of a person who almost despises black people for being different, a person who desires them to be separated from white people, a person who not even remotely believes in the ideals of freedom and equality for all human beings; therefore, where is the Lincoln that abolished slavery and saved slaves from a lifetime of submission? It appears as if he only believed in abolition when it was beneficial for him or his public image.

As stated before, his main aim was to maintain America together and erase conflicts and tensions and he did what was necessary to achieve it: he sometimes spoke in behalf of slaves and against slavery and other times almost the contrary. He knew how to manipulate and convince through words; in other words, he was a master of rhetoric.

In all these instances of speeches given before his election as president we can see how he used different arguments depending on the situation: when he wanted to convince people to vote for the Republican Party; and as equality and freedom were the main principles held by republicans, he focused his discourse towards the critic of slavery and the defense of the right of slaves to be free and thus attacked those who defended slavery but on the other hand and in order to maintain an atmosphere of peace between north and south and to avoid the rise of animosity over the negro question, he recognized the inferiority of blacks and the superiority of whites.

Therefore, he appears as a manipulative figure, both lacking a strong moral code and using the issue of slavery in his own behalf. In my opinion, what these historical documents reflect is that he actually was (as almost all politicians are nowadays) a deceiver who manipulated others throughout his rise to the presidency.

## **7.2 SPEECHES DURING PRESIDENCY (1961-1965)**

### 7.2.1 An Historic Step: The Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation; September 22, 1862

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure [...] all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom. [...] all slaves of such persons found *on* (or) being within any place occupied by rebel forces and afterwards occupied by the forces of the United States, shall be deemed captives of war, and shall be forever free of their servitude and not again held as slaves. (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 194)

In September, 1962 the Civil War was becoming a bloody, destructive conflict and Lincoln; seeing that the victory of the Union was not as clear as expected decided to write this preliminary proclamation freeing slaves in all the seceded slaves. By doing this, he achieved two targets: on the one hand he gained the former slaves for the Unionist cause and the Union army was strengthened with soldiers eager to have their revenge against those who enslaved them and on the other hand, he delivered a fatal blow to the Confederate's economic system.

He also appeared; in front of those who supported abolition and the emancipation of slaves, as a strong leader who cared for slaves and their situation but the truth is that it was nothing but a political tool that he used to put an end to the war and regain the unity of the nation.

History tends to say that the Civil War was fought precisely to eliminate the institution of slavery and to free slaves but I think that the main aim of the war was to secure America as a strong nation led by a centralized government and to do so; the Confederacy had to be defeated and to defeat the Confederacy, the abolition of slavery was an intelligent political movement directed by Lincoln himself. The slavery issue was used as a medium to win the war; it was not the actual cause of the war.

### 7.2.2 The Day of Liberation: Emancipation Proclamation; January 1, 1863

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion [...] 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 thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons. [...] 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. (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 210)

In this fragment it is again reflected how Lincoln used this proclamation as a military instrument for the purpose of defeating the Confederacy rather than an act of morality and true belief in the human right to freedom and equality: “as a fit and necessary war measure”.

However, he also tries to legitimate his decision arguing that it is a resolution based on the belief on justice and he even relates it to religion: "I invoke the gracious favor of Almighty God".

It is curious how in the same document he clearly states that the proclamation is merely an instrument to end the war but a few paragraphs later, he relates it to the moral obligation that is to fight and struggle to achieve equality and end discrimination. It appears as if defeating the Confederacy was much more important to him than freeing slaves; his duty as president to preserve the Union was stronger than his moral convictions.

### 7.2.3 Letter to Horace Greeley; August 22, 1862

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. [...] 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. (Basler, 1953: Volume V, 389)

In this letter to Horace Greeley; editor of the *New York Tribune*, Lincoln speaks openly and directly about what is his main concern regarding his position as president during the Civil War: he clearly states that his foremost preoccupation is to save the Union; to save the Union above anything else. It is not to end slavery or to free slaves since he himself says that "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it". All he does and decides about slavery (the Emancipation Proclamation for instance) is done with the purpose in mind of saving the Union; his concern about slavery is subjected to his concern about America itself.

It is clearly inferred that if slavery was something beneficial to save the Union or if its maintenance could help to end the War, he would have supported it instead of rejected it. It is therefore another instance of his manipulation and use of the slavery issue for a greater target: to save the Union.

#### 7.2.4 Immortal words: The Gettysburg Address; November 19, 1863

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war.

We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate -- we cannot consecrate -- we cannot hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth. (Fehrenbacher, 1964: 244)

This discourse; given by Lincoln after the Battle of Gettysburg, has been widely anthologized as being a strong, powerful claim for freedom and liberty. Lincoln, in the first lines, remembers how the founding fathers desired, through the writing of the Constitution, to create a nation based on the premise of equality among all human beings. Now, in the middle of a fratricidal war, it appears as if that premise is not being fulfilled since Americans are killing Americans and the nation is bleeding. This is why, Lincoln remembers all those who have died and perished in the battlefield, claiming not to forget their sacrifice but honor their courage by winning the war and creating again a strong nation that is to be free and with a government “of the people, by the people and for the people”. Ensure that the dead did not die in vain.

It is an appealing and emotional discourse to encourage soldiers to keep fighting since they are fighting for their homeland and for liberty. As said before, Lincoln was a master of rhetoric and knew how to persuade with words.

He focuses on the idea of freedom and equality but, as we have seen in previous documents, his main aim was to maintain the Union. The defense of freedom and equality as foundation of the nation is nothing but a political instrument.

### **7.3 HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS AFTER LINCOLN'S DEATH**

#### 7.3.1 - 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment: Slavery and Involuntary Servitude

The thirteenth Amendment to the U.S Constitution, by which slavery was legally abolished in all the American territory, is considered as the legacy and heritage of Abraham Lincoln as president. It is seen as the culmination of all his struggles and all his fight for the liberation of slaves and the eradication of slavery for being an amoral practice that challenged the ideals in which the nation is sustained: the claim that "all men are created equal". It was passed by the Senate on April 8, 1864, by the House on January 31, 1865, ratified by the states and finally adopted on December 6, 1865.

SECTION 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

SECTION 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. (Grossman, 2012: 163)

This amendment meant the liberation of a huge amount of slaves and their escape from a lifetime of misery and servitude under ruthless masters who humiliated them and, as it was considered to be the fulfilment of the dream of Abraham Lincoln (even though we have seen how this is not exactly true), he became a legend, a martyr and a symbol of the liberation of slaves.

He was remembered as an honest man who gave his own life and sacrificed for his nation; a man who fought with all his strength to create a better America; a nation based on democracy, freedom, equality and peace.

A president of the people, a president willing to do anything to maintain the unity of the country and moreover, the leader of the abolitionist movement, the guiding hand towards abolition and the man who guided the Union to victory in the Civil War and brought back peace.

All his accomplishments in life (and after his death) made him an almost mythical figure, a venerated leader of the great nation that America is today.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

It is undeniable that Lincoln had a great impact upon the abolition of slavery and the liberation of slaves after the Civil War but we should not be misled by what history books say: that he was a morally concerned person who was against slavery and injustice for considering it a moral evil, that he was genuinely concerned with inequality and the suffering of slaves since it can be true that he was against slavery but his main concern as president was to defeat the Confederacy and to restore the Union.

History remembers him for being the “father of freedom” or the “liberator of slaves” but this is only true to some extent. He used the abolition of slavery as a political and military tool and as an ideological argument to convince people of the necessity to support his presidency in order to end the war. Slavery was a relevant issue during his presidency but it has been demonstrated that it was not his essential concern; he used it as an instrument to save America.

Having seen the situation of America in the decades prior to the Civil War; marked by the rising confrontation and tension between North and South upon the issue of slavery and the gradual estrangement between American citizens, the fear towards the outbreak of a war that would divide the nation grew stronger as years passed. This fear also penetrated into Lincoln’s mind and as he became president, he knew that it was his responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of the nation and to avoid the war that was already looming. If war was inevitable (as it finally was), his main aim was to maintain the unity of the nation defeating the Confederacy and restoring order and peace.

Likewise; to win the war, Lincoln knew that he had to weaken the Confederacy and he thought that to declare slaves free would be a mortal wound to the already weak South's economy as well to their morale and this would bring the Union closer to the victory. This is the reason why he liberated slaves; this is the reason why he abolished slavery. It was not a decision driven by morality or justice; it was driven by convenience and necessity. However, it is somehow understandable that in a position of such responsibility and in a difficult situation as it was the Civil War, Lincoln had a priority that was to save the nation from chaos and destruction as it was his duty and everything else (including slavery) was subjected to it.

All this political strategy that Lincoln followed in his way to the presidency can be appreciated in the documents analyzed: in his first speeches he defended the ideals of freedom and equality as opposed to slavery; he positioned himself within or closer to abolitionists since he was a republican and the Republican Party sustained on these ideals.

Afterwards, in the *Lincoln – Douglass Debates*; he aimed to become representative of Illinois in the Senate and to do so, he had to gain popular support. Knowing that many Americans were not in favor of slaves but quite the contrary, he shifted his discourse and acknowledged that he was never in favor of complete equality, that both races are different and therefore incompatible to live together and that blacks are inferior by nature. We see how he had the ability to manipulate words and use them in his advantage to convince people.

On the other hand, after his election as president, he focused his attention on the issue of slavery and its abolition. However, and as I have already said, this was not a product of his own consciousness and concern about slaves but rather a consequence of the Civil War and the necessity to weaken the enemy.

All the words concerning slaves and slavery that he utters in his speeches; for instance, equality, freedom, right, liberation, justice, morality...hide his real objective: to maintain the unity of America.

As he said in his letter to *Horace Greeley* (Basler, 1953: Volume V, 389): “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it. What I do about slavery, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union.” These lines clearly summarize the thesis of my dissertation: that Lincoln liberated slaves is undeniable but it is also undeniable that he did it for a greater purpose: to save the Union.

## 9. REFERENCE LIST

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