

Ronald Reagan Speeches Emancipation Proclamation

Remarks at a White House Meeting With Reagan-Bush Campaign Leadership Groups, October 7, 1985 (http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/search/speeches/speech_srch.html)

“We know there are pockets of great pain in America, with casualties lining the roadsides stretching back for too many years. Well, we’re the party of Lincoln, born in the deep, rich soil of the plains, born and bred of hurdy-sturdy stock—the hardest working, most productive people in the world. And only by keeping our family farmers strong and only by keeping our family businesses strong will our Republican Party remain strong. When anxiety and despair knock at our door, we must answer with a willing hand, reaching out with support...

To those in our inner cities, in our ghettos and barrios, we say, “Our progress cannot be complete until the dream is real for all.” **The party of Lincoln** will not be whole until those who were with us once before rejoin us again, until they taste **the emancipation** of full economic justice and economic power. Let us make one thing plain: It is we who are battling for a true jobs agenda with enterprise zones and the youth opportunity wage. But if we’re to open these doors for millions of whites, blacks, and Hispanics, if we’re going to help people off unemployment, off welfare, and into the decent jobs they deserve, then we need to ask them for their support...

I can’t leave without reminding you that America must remain freedom’s staunchest friend, for freedom is our staunchest ally. It’s America’s responsibility and the responsibility of the Republican Party to stand with people that are being persecuted for their beliefs, to stand with people risking their lives for liberty, from Afghanistan to Angola to Nicaragua. Supporting them is not only morally right, it is the way of honor; to abandon these brave souls would be to condemn America to eternal shame. By pushing forward the frontiers of freedom, we reinvigorate the forces for democracy and peace.”

Remarks in Denver, Colorado, at the Annual Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, June 29, 1981

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Harriet Tubman, who was known as the “conductor” of that earlier underground railroad, said on her first escape from slavery, “When I found I had crossed that line, I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything.” Even after a century the beauty of her words is powerful. We can only imagine the soaring of her soul, what a feeling that must have been when she crossed into freedom and the physical and mental shackles fell from her person. Harriet Tubman's glory was the glory of the American experience. It was a glory which had no color or religious preference or nationality. It was simply, eloquently, the universal thirst that all people have for freedom.

Well, there are poor people in this country who should experience just such an elation if they found the economic freedom of a solid job, a productive job -- not one concocted by government and dependent on Washington winds; a real job where they could put in a good day's work, complain about the boss, and then go home with confidence and self-respect. Why has this Nation been unable to fill such a basic, admirable need? The government can provide subsistence, yes, but it seldom moves people up the economic ladder. And as I've said before,

you have to get on the ladder before you can move up on it. I believe many in Washington, over the years, have been more dedicated to making needy people government-dependent rather than independent. They've created a new kind of bondage, because regardless of how honest their intention in the beginning, those they set out to help soon became clients essential to the well-being of those who administered the programs.

An honest program would be dedicated to making people independent, no longer in need of government assistance. But then what would happen to those who made a career of helping? Well, Americans have been very generous, with good intentions and billions of dollars, toward those they believed were living in hardship. And yet, in spite of the hopes, the government has never lived up to the dreams of poor people. Just as the **Emancipation** Proclamation freed black people 118 years ago, today we need to declare an economic **emancipation**... There's a truth to the words spoken by John F. Kennedy that a rising tide lifts all boats. Yes, I know it's been said, "What about the fellow without a boat who can't swim?" Well, I believe John Kennedy's figure of speech was referring to the benefits which accrue to all when the economy is flourishing."

Remarks at a Fundraising Dinner for Howard University, May 20, 1982

(http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/search/speeches/speech_srch.html)

"James Madison said that a well-instructed people alone can be permanently a free people. Well, it wasn't until 1867, in the aftermath of a tragic and violent war and Lincoln's **Emancipation** Proclamation, that America gave birth to a new era and to Howard University. This would be a center of learning to fulfill the promise of Lincoln, serving the people who had waited so long to enjoy what was theirs by birthright.

Lincoln was a simple man but he spoke great truths. He said, "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent." This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this is no democracy.

Remarks to Students From Hine Junior High School on Abraham Lincoln, February 12, 1987

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"...Well now, we've gathered here this afternoon to celebrate the life of Abraham Lincoln. And I suppose I'd better point out that, despite what you may have heard, it's not true that honest Abe and I went to school together. [Laughter] It is true, however, in this young country of ours, that when I was your age there were Americans who could remember Abraham Lincoln -- people who had heard the tall lanky man promise "malice toward none" as he stood on a platform at the Capitol to give his second inaugural address; people who had gathered in a field in the gentle land of southern Pennsylvania to see the gaunt, war-weary President dedicate a cemetery with the Gettysburg Address; people who'd heard Mr. Lincoln swap jokes with country politicians and seen his dark eyes sparkle; people who'd stood by the tracks in silence as a train draped in Union flags rolled past, bearing the body of the fallen President from Washington across the great spaces of the young Nation back home to Springfield, Illinois. Indeed, on Memorial Day there would be members of the Grand Army of the Republic marching in that parade, veterans of the Civil War. Even now, ours remains a young nation. And Lincoln gave voice to that youth. For even in the bleakest moments, even when he set his face grimly toward war, he was untouched

by cynicism or loss of faith. Mr. Lincoln believed -- he believed in freedom, believed in the goodness and the ability of his heroes -- the people of this country.

Abe Lincoln was born in 1809 in a log cabin in the western wilds of Kentucky. And he spent his entire youth and boyhood in poverty, in frontier places where men hewed down endless trees, forcing the forest with their own muscles to give up its poor land for crops; where women cooked over open fires and washed their clothes in creeks. Formal education was impossible, but young Lincoln pored over the few books he could find, studying the Bible in particular, probably the only book that his family owned. And I'm sure you must have heard that sitting by the open fire as a boy, he would work out arithmetic problems and so forth with a piece of charcoal on a wooden shovel that was there by the fireplace. The first lesson that the life of Abraham Lincoln has to teach is: You don't have to be rich to love learning and make something of yourself.

Before he became President, Lincoln succeeded as a lawyer in only a modest way; and in politics, he failed repeatedly. He lost his first race for the State legislature in Illinois. And when at last he was elected, he ran twice for speaker of the Illinois house. And both times he was defeated. In 1856 he campaigned for his party's Vice-Presidential nomination, and the nomination went to another. In 1858, he ran for the Senate, and he was defeated. Even as President, Lincoln at first seemed a loser. The Union armies met defeat in the crucial early engagement of the Civil War, then frittered away time drilling on their campgrounds when they should have been pursuing the enemy. In England, the most powerful nation in Europe, informed opinion sided with the Confederacy and held that it would be a matter of months before the North lost the war and the crude, backwoods President was forgotten. That's the second lesson Mr. Lincoln can teach us: If you are in the right, ignore defeat. Persevere. For in persevering, Lincoln saved the Union and won freedom for the more than one-tenth of the population that had been kept down in bondage.

Like all men, Lincoln was affected by the prejudices of his time -- even in his first years as President he held that, subject to certain conditions, slavery could never be tolerated. But Lincoln kept thinking; his understanding of human dignity deepened. In September of 1862 Lincoln assembled his Cabinet. He explained that he'd made a vow regarding human freedom to himself and, he added hesitatingly, to "his maker." When Congress convened in December, he explained, he would push for compensated **emancipation** in the States that had remained loyal to the Union. And then President Lincoln read the text of the **Emancipation** Proclamation, a document declaring that in the rebel States, all Americans, whatever their color, should be "...thenceforward and forever free."

This is Lincoln's greatest lesson, this lesson in liberty. He understood that the idea of human liberty is bound up in the very nature of our nation. He understood that America cannot be America without standing for the cause of freedom. He had often asked himself, Mr. Lincoln once said, what great principle or idea it was that held the Union together for so long. "It was not," he said, "the mere matter of the separation . . . from the motherland." It was something more. It was "... something in that Declaration of Independence giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world . . . it was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men."

In other countries, young men and women your age look back on the histories of their nations to emperors and kings, glorious figures raised in palaces, attended upon by servants, given every refinement of education by the most eminent scholars of the day. You as Americans look back on a different kind of figure; a poor man; a humble man of the frontier and prairie whose parents could neither read nor write; a man polite society looked down on because he told too many jokes. Yet, for all that, a man who shook the world by consecrating himself and his nation to liberty. You know, I have to tell you something about that joking thing. A great many people criticized him. They thought he laughed too much and had jokes. He had an answer for them. He said, "I couldn't perform the duties of this job for 15 minutes if I couldn't laugh." And then he went on and said something else, also -- not at that same time. He said also that he couldn't perform the duties of that office if he didn't feel that he could ask for help from someone who was wiser and stronger than all others.

- Mr. Coles, Teacher. RESPONSE to Reagan's Remarks to Students From Hine Junior High School on Abraham Lincoln, February 12, 1987

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"You know, a few years ago, as I look back down the annals of time, as I travel back to 1809 -- I see a little baby, a baby who could not know his destiny; a baby who could not know that the unity of the whole country will rest in his hands; a baby who could not know that he will be responsible for the removal of a nation's shackles. And then, as time progresses, I see this boy gradually accepting the mantle of manhood. And then, as we come up to 1863, I see, as Dr. King said, "a facilitating President signing the **Emancipation** Proclamation." And then, as we come through the years, as we come up to 1983, another Republican President is in the White House. This President also saw the need to remove shackles. These were the shackles of indifference toward education. President Lincoln's proclamation was used to unite the country, but President Reagan's proclamation was used to unite the minds. President Lincoln's proclamation can be found in any reference book, while President Reagan's proclamation is a living testament to the commitment of educational excellence.

The shackles that President Reagan loosed were not physical shackles; they were the shackles of ignorance. They were the shackles that bound the mind and kept the school from reaching its maximum potential. It seemed as if nothing could break these bonds. And then there came a man, a man with the authority to make a change and the compassion to do so. This man, much like Abraham Lincoln, saw the condition and proceeded to rectify it. And it was then that the school adoption program was implemented. And now I, on behalf of the students of Hines Junior High School, wish to thank you, Mr. Reagan."