



RAIN ON THE LINCOLN PARADE

Around Lincoln's birthday each year, children are taught that Lincoln was the "Great Emancipator," that he "saved the Union," and was one of our greatest Presidents. This year, let's re-examine what we think we know about our 16th President.

Did Lincoln wage the "Civil War" to free the slaves? Lincoln's own words tell us: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery." The reason Lincoln gave for his naval blockade of Southern ports in 1861 was that "the collection of the revenue cannot be effectually executed" in the states that had seceded.

Was Lincoln a great emancipator? Lincoln's words in the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation tell us his goal. Slaves were freed **only** in "States and parts of States...in rebellion against the United States...as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion...such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service."

Did Lincoln save the Union? Not if the Union was a voluntary association of States that delegated limited, enumerated powers to the federal government as it was prior to the war. Lincoln's use of military force against the peaceful secession of southern states gutted the Ninth and Tenth Amendments and laid the foundation for the federal leviathan we have today. Lincoln nationalized the banking system, lavished federal subsidies on railroad-building corporations, and introduced income taxation along with the associated internal revenue bureaucracy.

Was Lincoln one of our greatest Presidents? Lincoln was directly responsible for the deaths of 660,000 Americans, more than all our other Presidents combined. Lincoln was also arguably the greatest violator of the Constitution of any President. Beyond the death and destruction wreaked on the South, Lincoln imprisoned thousands of northerners, shut down dozens of newspapers, locked up the Maryland legislature, had his most vocal Democratic opponent deported, and issued an arrest warrant for the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, all for disagreeing with his policies.

During the 19th century, dozens of countries, including the British and Spanish empires, ended slavery peacefully. With our own abolitionist movement growing ever more powerful, with leaders such as William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Frederick Douglass at the forefront, there is no reason we would not have joined them.

Columbus Day is much less enthusiastically celebrated than in the past, as Columbus' legacy of cruelty to native peoples has become better understood. Lincoln's birthday should assume the same course, as more people understand his unnecessary war, civil rights abuses, favors for the politically-connected, and tax-increase policies.

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