Lincoln and American Values Symposium

Lincoln and Emancipation

September 20, 2008

The Emancipation Proclamation is Lincoln's most sweeping Presidential act. This panel discussed the fact that although Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation have been revered as symbols of liberation, understanding the Proclamation has often proven puzzling. Moderated by **Michael Vorenberg**, panelists include **Edna Greene Medford**, associate professor of history, Howard University and co-author of *The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views* ; **James Horton**, Benjamin Banneker Professor of American Studies and History, George Washington University and author of *Slavery and the Making of America*; and **Frank J. Williams**

MICHAEL VORENBERG: All right. If I could begin our next session, welcome back from lunch, and we are now moving on to a second session, and I have changed hats but not suits... [Laughter] and have moved from being a panelist to being a moderator for this session, which is a session on Lincoln and emancipation. I'm going to introduce our speakers and then just say a few words of overview. And I'm not going to give lengthy introductions because there are good, long, full introductions in the author biography packet and also in the brochures and also because, as was said this morning about some of the speakers, if I give full biographies, we won't be done with this session. So let me just begin in order of who will be speaking.

The first person who will be talking is James O. Horton, who is the Benjamin Banneker Professor Emeritus of American Studies in History at the George Washington University and author, or co-author, of 10 books, including "In Hope of Liberty" from 1997, as well as the companion volume to the much-watched PBS series "Slavery and the Making of America." He is one of the most active historians committed to public history. He has been primary consultant or primary advisor on many public history projects, including--it's a long list, but it includes The Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, the National

Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, and the Colonial Williamsburg, Monticello, and he was the chief historian of the slavery component in the New York exhibition on Slavery in New York at the New York Historical Society.

Our second panelist is Frank Williams, who was already introduced this morning, and he is obviously an expert on legal and constitutional issues especially those related to Lincoln. He is also co-author and co-editor of "The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views," a 2006 book, and so he has written there and other places on legal and constitutional dimensions of emancipation and Lincoln's role in emancipation. And he is, as was mentioned before, the chief justice-- my chief justice--of the state of Rhode Island since I'm a resident of Rhode Island. He outranks me.

[Laughter]

And finally, Edna Greene Medford, a professor at Howard University and has been the director of—also very active in public history, including being the director of the history component of New York's African Burial Ground and has published many many articles and essays, too many to mention here but I'll just mention that she is one of the other authors, editors of "The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views" with Frank Williams and with Harold Holzer being the third, who was here, the moderator of the previous panel. She is the recipient of the 2006 Outstanding Graduate Faculty of the Year Award at Howard and has appeared frequently on the History Channel and C-SPAN.

I will ask each of the panelists to speak for roughly 5 to10 minutes or so and then afterwards, what I will do is to try to have a sort of conversation among ourselves here. I'll ask some questions that will trigger more discussion among them, and then leaving at least 25 minutes or half an hour for questions from the audience that they can then answer. So when they are done speaking, I ask you not to stand up right away for questions because there's gonna be a bit of a follow-up discussion first.

There are many things I could say about Lincoln and emancipation as an overview. I think it's telling that in polls done of who is the most famous or the greatest president, Lincoln continues to emerge as number one. In fact, there was recently something--I guess there was you could vote on the Web for who is or was the greatest president, and I know this because I received an e-mail saying, from someone whose name I won't mention because he's well- known here, saying it turns out you can vote more than once.

[Laughter]

And this person wasn't from Chicago. But anyway, I think even without the stuffing of the ballot boxes, Lincoln tends to come out number one. I often work with secondary school teachers, elementary school teachers, and I ask them, when they talk about Lincoln to

their students--and I ask my own students this--I'm a college teacher--why is it, what is Lincoln best known for?

Is he known primarily as the savior of the Union preserver of the Constitution? And always, still to this day, after so many years of scholarship and debate within journals, the public the number-one reason is that Lincoln freed the slaves, or at least that's what is said. And whether he freed the slaves, what role he played in freeing the slaves, his relation to emancipation, to African-Americans, is the topic here, but that that remains so central a fixture in American and world memory of Lincoln I think forces us to engage with this issue as central, absolutely central to the question of Lincoln. And we stand here on the eve of the Lincoln bicentennial but on the bicentennial or anniversary of so many other things.

I've already mentioned that 2008 was the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade the trans-Atlantic slave trade. We will be facing other bicentennials, 2013 being the bicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation itself. So these issues of slavery and Lincoln, emancipation and Lincoln, are tied together of course and should be, and we could not have assembled a better panel to help us to understand the way these issues are tangled together and to help us untangle them, if that can be done. So I ask Jim Horton to begin. Just some overview of comments, overview comments.

JIM HORTON: Well, for anybody--and I'm sure you all fall into this category--who's read even a little bit about Abraham Lincoln, the one thing I think we can all agree upon is this was a very complex man. 3 days ago, I gave a lecture at a gathering that looked at Abraham Lincoln in a variety of ways and especially when we're talking about slavery and issues of race. It becomes very, very clear, as I said then, Abraham Lincoln is the most important historical flip-flopper in American history and my absolute favorite. You know, today, if a person changes his mind on some political issue, we say he's a flip-flopper. But you know, there's another way of saying that and that is, he shows the capacity for personal growth. That is, as you learn more, you incorporate your new information into your thinking, and it changes your thinking if you've learned things that contradict what you had thought before, as opposed to those people who are consistent no matter what. "Don't confuse me with evidence. Let me believe what I want to believe."

[Laughter]

Lincoln was not that way. Lincoln was a man who was willing and able to change his mind when he got new information. That made him a really complex figure. One of the things that-- there's a new book out, by the way. George Fredrickson wrote a book that just came out this year, and the title of the book is "Big Enough to Be Inconsistent," and he uses this phrase, which W.E.B. Du Bois an African-American historian and writer of great repute in the early 20th century, gave some lectures and used this term to describe Lincoln—that is, big enough to be inconsistent. Lincoln understood the complexity of his time. He also

understood the fact that he really tried to walk a very tight line between his belief in the significance of the Declaration of Independence and what he saw as the restraints imposed by the Constitution.

In fact, you know, Lincoln compared himself often to Charles Blondin. Charles Blondin, in 1859, was the first man to cross Niagara Falls on a tightrope. He was a tightrope walker, and that's what Lincoln thought about himself. He thought about himself as engaged in a kind of tightrope-walking through American politics and American history, and in some ways, he was very very right.

You know, earlier today, we've had people who talked about the Declaration of Independence, and Lincoln really believed in that. In fact, at one point, he warned the nation. He said, you know, one of the things that really bothers me about the fact that we continue to hold people in slavery is that people around the world will see that and they will look at us and start to doubt whether we really believe in this Declaration of Independence.

But by the same token, he also, no matter how he felt about the institution of slavery--you know, in 1854, he wrote--I'm sorry, 1864, he wrote a letter to a friend in which he said, "I've always been anti-slavery." He says, "I am anti-slavery, and I can't remember a time when I wasn't anti-slavery." He disliked the institution of slavery. He thought it was inhumane. But he thought that the institution of slavery was protected by the laws of the nation and the Constitution and therefore, no matter how he felt about it personally he thought he had no right to take action against it.

Now, this changed over time, and part of what changed this was actions of the southern slave-holding states. You know, African-Americans, when they first heard about South Carolina threatening the possibility of secession, they in many cases were not upset at all.

In fact, I can quote one African-American abolitionist for you--H. Ford Douglas--who says to South Carolina, he says, "Stand not on ceremony. Go at once."

[Laughter]

What he means is—this is kind of a paraphrase of a Shakespearean quote--what he meant was, so long as you remain a part of the United States, that institution of slavery was protected by the Constitution, but when you remove yourself from the protection of the Constitution, you remove yourself also from the protection by the U.S. military of your human property.

You know, to make it clear, he adds, "Do you think John Brown will be the last?" He knows that John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry was ended not by the local militia but by the U.S. military, by the U.S. Marines that came in and put an end to John Brown's raid.

Ironically, U.S. Marines led by Robert E. Lee who was a commander in the U.S. Marines, and Jeb Stuart was his second in command, so it's a very interesting thing.

But the whole point that Douglas--H. Ford Douglas this is not Frederick, now; this is a different Douglas--H. Ford Douglas was trying to make is that if you remove slavery from the protection of the federal government you make it possible for slaves and those who are opposed to slavery to take action that would be effective action against it. Lincoln was opposed to slavery, but because he thought that he was limited, even as President, by the Constitution, he didn't think he could take action against slavery in the places where it existed.

In fact, he said that in his first inaugural address. He tried to assure the South. He said, "I have no intention of taking action against slavery in the places where it currently "exists," but what he wanted to do was to stop it from spreading. He wanted to contain slavery. In the long run, he thought that in containing slavery eventually he would bring it to an end. Well, this was a very difficult task, in part because--and I don't think most of us in the 21st century realize this--slavery was a terribly terribly powerful institution, and those who profited from slavery, those who were slaveholders were very powerful in large part because of the economic and the political power that came from slave ownership.

Economically, you know, slavery provided the labor for the production of cotton, and lest you think that's just some kind of very interesting side product in American society, recognize this--that by 1815, cotton was the most valuable thing that the nation--not the South, the entire nation--exported.

By 1840, cotton was more valuable than everything this nation exported to the world combined, and those factors combined to make slaves very, very valuable. Do you realize that on the eve of the Civil War the dollar value of slaves in the United States was greater than the dollar value of all of the railroads in the United States, all of the banks in the United States, all of the manufacturing in the United States combined. The fact is that slavery was very economically important and not only to the United States.

The American South produced 7/8 of the world's cotton. Very true to say—although they probably wouldn't have used this term, but you can say it--they were the OPEC of cotton production of the time. What that meant was that when the South thought about the possibility of seceding, they thought, You know what? Because we have what the cotton textile-makers in England, the cotton textile-makers in France the cotton textile-makers in Germany need—and incidentally, how about the cotton textile-makers in New England?

Because we have what they need, we can put pressure on them to help us—to recognize us and to provide us with the kind of foundation for nationhood and the facilities for defending ourselves that we're going to need if this results in war so that slavery was very, very powerful and really really significant.

Therefore, it does make a difference that Lincoln moves gradually towards a point where he is willing to issue an Emancipation Proclamation. Now, we all know the Emancipation Proclamation didn't apply to Delaware.

It didn't apply to--by the way, 16 slaves that were still counted in the U.S. census of 1860 in New Jersey. But it did apply to all those places that were at that point in rebellion against the United States and it does signal a willingness on the part of Lincoln, obviously during a time of war when he can justify it by the fact that these were war powers that the President had, as opposed to him stepping outside of the limits of presidential power, and it also shows that he is moving towards the act of real abolition.

He doesn't live to see it, but he supports a 13th amendment to the Constitution. You know, if the Constitution protects slavery, one of the things you might do is to change the Constitution, which is what he then advocated and the 13th amendment finally did, and it comes into being in 1865, the same year that he was assassinated.

The other thing that's interesting and we have to understand is that Lincoln was a politician--that is, he was involved in politics and he understood the limitations of politics so that, for example, when he was doing his debates with Stephen A. Douglas in Illinois for the Senate in 1858, he didn't stand up and say, "I'm a racial egalitarian. I am in opposition to slavery," because Douglas was trying to paint him with that brush, and so what he did was he stood up to argue in a very different direction so as to give him an opportunity a possibility of a decent showing.

The fact is that he does change, even despite his political concerns. He gets to know Frederick Douglass. In fact, Frederick Douglass, a former slave, comes to the White House to see the President of the United States and is received by the President of the United States, and Douglass says, "He stood up when I walked in the room. He called me Mr. Douglas. He shook my hand."

He then later invites Frederick Douglass to the party at the White House after his second inaugural when he was elected President in 1864, so that he really starts to know Douglass and his relationship with Douglass, I think, helps to change his views not only on slavery but also on race. In front of the whole audience, as Douglass comes into the party at the White House after the second inaugural, he says, "There's my friend Douglass. Douglass, there's nobody in this country who I care more about in terms of his evaluation of my speech." He's talking about his second inaugural address.

"What do you think?" This is a different—at least in terms of what he's saying--this is a different Abraham Lincoln than the one that participated in the debates in 1858. Douglass appreciated this, and let me conclude with a statement that Frederick Douglass wrote after Lincoln's assassination. He says, quote, "Though Mr. Lincoln shared "the prejudices of his white fellow countrymen against the Negro"--this is what Douglass said--"it is hardly

necessary to say that in his heart of hearts, he loathed and hated slavery." He moved to this position. Part of what pushed him was the role that African-Americans played as soldiers in the war itself and what Lincoln said was helping to win that war.

He's a really complex person, which is worth our effort to try to understand because his life and his views and the way they changed has something important to say about politics in today's society and how we ought to be using terms like flip-flopper.

[Laughter]

VORENBERG: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: Well, here I am again--a thorn between two roses right here.

[Laughter]

And in the middle, as always, the middle-- where's the archivist? Do I see him?

MAN: He's doing alchemy.

FRANK WILLIAMS: All right, all right. This whole idea of a symposium with the assistance of Budge and Russ started when I introduced the Archivist to a Genealogical Society meeting in Boston over a year and a half ago, so we thank him and the great staff here for pulling this off, along with a flank attack by Budge and Russ Weidman. Well, Jim is absolutely right about Lincoln's complexity because I don't think, as Alan Guelzo does--and he was supposed to be here today, but his son is returning from Iraq and wanted to greet him as he should--that Lincoln intended to issue an Emancipation Proclamation all along, from the firing on Fort Sumter.

I think as much as he detested the institution I think at least initially his prime goal was to reunite the states. That evolved, I think. It evolved into not only the goal of reunification as he articulates in the letter to Greeley, but in changing the war's goal from reunification to reunification and emancipation, that's a very tough thing to do in wartime, to change the war's mission.

Probably one of the few times in the history of the world that the war goals were changed. Well, how did he do it? There's a lot going on. He wasn't just thinking about emancipation. He had a Cabinet to deal with, the Congress the public, the media, 11 seceded states called the Confederate States of America, not wanting to recognize them as a belligerent nation but sometimes being forced to do some things in international law that was tantamount to recognizing them, like declaring a blockade.

So what's going on here with this man, with the loneliness of command that I talked to you about this morning, and what I consider to be great political courage and leadership?

Well, we start with the contrabands. What do you do with these African-Americans who make it into Union lines? No place to put them. No legal status. Working for the Union military, and some commanders are sending them back to the plantation. Some are keeping them. Then you deal with the confiscation acts. Very difficult to understand with the emphasis on property but taking that property from those who supported the Confederacy, and no slave was ever freed, as Lincoln acknowledged, by employing the confiscation acts and filing actions in the U.S. district courts.

So Lincoln evolves into a Machiavellian individual, and I mean that in the best sense of the word. Jim is right. He was a politician and a great one. He practiced politics before he studied law, and he did that all through his life. In fact, I call him "the lawyer in the White House."

How do you justify issuing this act, whether it's preliminary or final, when the Constitution is protecting slavery and there are 4 states in the North that still have it, maybe 5 with New Jersey now that have this institution?

Maryland and Delaware and Missouri and Kentucky and Lincoln's always worried about losing them especially Kentucky. "We must have Kentucky," he would say. So he does this thing that I think demonstrates great presence, self-confidence, leadership. He issues the proclamation first as a preliminary proclamation in September after the Battle of Antietam because he needed a victory, at least perceived victory. It wasn't that great a victory with McClellan who had "the slows," as we all know. And he didn't want to issue what he called "the Pope's bull against a comet" and have no effect, so he waits for Antietam, September 22. He issues the preliminary proclamation. He had already had a pre-preliminary draft in July. And he issues it, what? Not as a statute. He can't pass statues. That's Congress. Not as a Supreme Court decision. He's not on the court. He issues it as a war measure as the Commander in Chief. And what's the rationale he uses? Well, the slaves are property. Isn't it true that in wartime, you can seize not only the property of your friend but the property of your enemy in order to wage that war?

And that's exactly what Lincoln was doing. Now, there were broader--there's certainly a moral--there's a moral level to his action, but he needed a legal rationale, a basis for doing what he was doing and that essentially was it. Now, this was not popular in the North. Remember, September 22, 1862. What's coming up next month, October, November? Elections, right? And I think--I don't know the exact number, but over 30 seats in the House were lost to his party for his issuing this proclamation. He knew.

He knew he was under some political stress and threat, but he did it nonetheless, and of course the consequences in the Union army and navy were not much better. Many of

these soldiers and sailors had enlisted to what? Save the Union, not free African-Americans. So, this took guts for a president and a commander-in-chief to do. And again, you know, I say--I can't say enough how--how multitasking he was because in that interregnum between September 22 and January 1, 1863, when he signed the final proclamation, that great document that's in this institution--sometimes they bring it out of storage, it's so--they worry about its condition. You see that bold name "Abraham Lincoln," still bold after having shaken thousands of hands at his New Year's Day reception in the White House.

What was going on? Well, the war wasn't that great after Antietam, either. McClellan wouldn't move. "What have the horses done of your army that fatigue anything?" Lincoln would write to McClellan. We have Fredericksburg in December under that great Rhode Islander general Ambrose Burnside.

[Laughter]

And you have a cabinet crisis, don't you, in December 1862, where Salmon P. Chase is conspiring with Republican senators to replace Lincoln in the reelection campaign or the election of 1864, and word comes back to Lincoln through the intel, the intelligence, and he does another great political maneuver--he and--this is an attempt to force Secretary of State Seward out of office. Seward tenders his resignation, Lincoln refuses to accept it, and he invites all the members of his cabinet except Seward but including Chase and these senators, who are conspiring, to the White House and the issue is whether or not Chase accuses Lincoln of not advising or consulting with his cabinet, and he asks each one if he has meetings and consults with him, and every one, including Chase, agrees that Lincoln did consult with him, which was a great embarrassment to Chase and those senators who wanted Chase as their man. Now, this is all going on--the election, the war, the political shenanigans--before the issuance of the final proclamation.

So, we're not dealing in a vacuum here. We're dealing with a brilliant political leader who was able to pull this off. I think once, as he said, the promise having been made, he was gonna keep it despite many attempts subsequent thereto to withdraw. I don't know how much Edna's going to get into this. I'm much impressed with her theory about when slavery was eradicated in the District of Columbia in April of '62. There was a few days before Lincoln signed the bill, and I would always wonder with Edna, well, you know, what's a few days by the president? But it's like imprisonment. If you're imprisoned for one minute or enslaved for one minute, it's an eternity. And Lincoln knew this. You're gonna ask, we're gonna say about the saw, the old saw that we hear now, I'm not sure African-Americans believe Lincoln is the great emancipator like they once did, but that Emancipation Proclamation freed no one, because it really served as a military measure. He couldn't free them in Missouri, Kentucky, Delaware, Maryland. Only the Union army and navy could free them as they advanced into Confederate territory.

Well, let me tell you something. It did free slaves. Many of them ran, self-emancipated, once they found out that now there was a government in Washington that had a change in policy that supported emancipation. But in addition to those who ran, knowing that and hearing about it, there were incidents where Southern planters refused to emancipate their slaves as the Union army advanced, and what happened? They were arrested and tried by military tribunals and incarcerated.

So, this was a very serious business, the whole policy of emancipation. Lincoln was worried about the legal consequences of whether he as a commander-in-chief could issue a war measure, a military measure. He clearly wanted the bodies, 200,000, we think, over 200,000, although we put 170,000 in our book. I'm sorry we didn't use that former figure, Edna. Men who served in the Union Army and Navy and helped win the war, the Civil War. But he was really worried about--and this came up this morning--I think he was really worried about a legal challenge against it, and I think it's one reason why he insisted on the resolution in the Republican Party platform in 1864 that would seek a constitutional amendment that later became the 13th Amendment to finally do away with involuntary servitude everywhere. And he pressed for that, as Michael's great book on the 13th Amendment describes so well...and politicked for it so that that emancipation can turn into something more permanent than a war measure.

So, I think we're dealing with what Jim has described, a very complex individual who may have made some mistakes, as we all do, but they were not mistakes of self-doubt. Thank you.

EDNA GREENE MEDFORD: What Frank was beginning to allude to was that racial divide, actually, between how African-Americans tend to view Lincoln and how the rest of America tends to view him. I have not been studying Lincoln seriously as a historical subject for very long, only about 15 years.

[Laughter]

Just--well--but there are people who actually were introduced to him in a serious way in the childhood, so when you consider 15 years up against someone who's been doing it for 40 or 50 years, makes a real difference, but when I first started seriously looking at Lincoln during the war years, I was struck by the fact that my conclusions were quite different from some of the secondary literature I was reading, and initially, I chalked it up to me being just the oppositional person I tend to be, you know. I remember when I was a rather mouthy young girl, my mother said to me once that my mouth would be the death of me, and the older I get, I tend to think she may be right about that, OK?

But as I dug deeper into African-American memory on Lincoln, it seemed that there was this variety of attitudes about Lincoln through history. In some instances, there was the reverence, as in, you know, how the former slaves--how the free people felt about him.

But the actual--it would swing from reverence to ambivalence to hostility to cynicism to indifference, and sometimes all of those attitudes during the same era, sometimes with the same individual. And so you're right, there is that difference in approach, and I think that perhaps I understand more clearly now why it is that African-Americans may have a different view or are simply rather indifferent to Lincoln despite the fact that he was the author of the Emancipation Proclamation.

In looking at this topic historically, we see that the freed people were very reverential toward him because they saw him as their deliverer. Even before he did anything that was going to assist them, they believed that he was going to be their deliverer, because they heard snippets of conversation from their owners that said that Lincoln is going to free the slaves.

So even before he issued the proclamation, there was that view that he was a friend to African-Americans, and so when he actually issued the Emancipation Proclamation, it confirmed their faith in Lincoln, and so when he died, African-Americans probably mourned him more than anybody else for 2 reasons: first, because they thought that he would protect them against all of the violence and the discrimination that they knew would come once the war was over, and indeed it did come. But another reason why they mourned him so thoroughly was because they saw the proclamation as promising them not just freedom from slavery but real equality, that it would give them citizenship, and they believed that Lincoln was the guarantor of that promise.

Now, whether or not Lincoln saw it that way is up for debate. It's not likely that that's what he was doing when he issued the proclamation. It was about freeing those people in those states still in rebellion. Now, certainly by the end of the war, by the end of his life, Lincoln was moving in the direction of some citizenship rights, some limited citizenship rights for African-Americans. But the freed people believed that that's what he had promised them, and so when he died, all of their hopes went with him. But it didn't take long for some of the more--the less sentimental and more practical African-American leaders to look at what Lincoln had done and actually criticize him.

So, you have Frederick Douglass in 1865 saying Lincoln was the black man's president, but by 1876, when Reconstruction is on the wane, when African-Americans are losing any of the gains that they had received during Reconstruction, you have Frederick Douglass at the Freedmen's Memorial here in Washington saying that Lincoln was emphatically the white man's president. We were only his stepchildren. And, of course, that--it's because of all of the kinds of things that African-Americans are facing during this period.

But even then, and throughout the 19th century, you had African-American leaders that recognized that they could use Lincoln in 2 ways. They could use him to inspire former slaves, the freed people, to try to better themselves despite the kinds of discrimination they were facing. if they would simply remember that Lincoln freed them, then perhaps

they would work that much harder to be good citizens in America, but at the same time, these African-American leaders understood the role that Lincoln as icon played for white Americans as well, and so every opportunity they got, they brought up Lincoln's name, trying to get white Americans to be more magnanimous toward African-Americans.

It generally didn't work, OK? And so that period at the end--from about 1877 to 1900--has been called the nadir by some historians, the low point in African-American history, because of the lynchings and the discrimination and other violence that was occurring, especially in the south but in some other areas of the country as well, and we know that once we get into the 20th century, you even have lynchings and race riots occurring in northern cities, and, of course, you have the formation of the Klan and so forth.

But there was always that effort to sort of put Lincoln out there as a symbol of--as the friend to African-Americans, so the NAACP, for instance, is formed around the time of the Lincoln centennial, the celebration--the 100th celebration of his birthday. But by the 1920s, you have some people who are seriously, if not criticizing Lincoln, at least are questioning what his motivations were. So, you have someone like Du Bois , for instance, and Jim has touched on that. He writes an article in "Crisis" magazine. It's the official organ for the NAACP. And he calls Lincoln--he says Lincoln "is big enough to be inconsistent. He's cruel and merciful at the same time, peace-loving but a fighter, despising Negroes and letting them fight and vote, protecting slavery and freeing slaves. He was a man, a big, inconsistent, brave man."

Well, the readers of "Crisis" magazine only saw the parts that were negative and were very much concerned about what Du Bois had said, so much so that he had to respond to their criticisms, and this is what he wrote in response a couple of months later. And I think it's instructive. He says, "We love to think of the great as flawless. We yearn in our imperfection toward perfection. Sinful, we envision--we [indistinct] envisage" -excuse me, I've had 4 hours of sleep--so--and it's beginning to show. "We envisage righteousness. As a result of this, no sooner does a great man die than we begin to whitewash him. We seek to forget all that was small and mean and unpleasant and remember the fine and brave and good. We slur over and explain away his inconsistencies and at last there begins to appear not the real man but the tradition of the man--remote, intense--" "immense," excuse me--"perfect, cold, and dead."

Now, Du Bois was an admirer of Lincoln, OK, so he was not--he was not criticizing him in the sense that he felt that he had done nothing for African-Americans, but he was trying to put the motivations and actions during the war into some kind of larger context, but people were not ready to hear that.

Robert Vann, who was the editor of the "Pittsburgh Courier," was even more critical of Lincoln about a decade later. Because African-Americans were suffering enormously, as a result of the Depression, all of America was, but African-Americans especially were,

Robert Vann actually encouraged African-Americans to turn Lincoln's picture to the wall because the debt had been paid. And so you have during this period some African American leaders who are saying, "Enough is enough," you know. It's OK to revere the man, but you don't have to spend the rest of your lives paying him back or his party back for what you think was accomplished by the Emancipation Proclamation, and in fact, you have some former slaves who themselves are beginning to question what the proclamation was all about and how much it actually gave them freedom.

Remember, these are people who believe that the proclamation promised more than just freedom but it promised equality as well. And so I'll give you an instance of one former slave who is responding to what he feels is Lincoln getting too much credit for having freed the slaves. So, he says, "Lincoln got the praise for freeing us, but did he do it? He give us freedom without giving us any chance to live to ourselves, and we still had to depend on the southern white man for work, food, and clothing, and he held us through our necessity and want in a state of servitude but little better than slavery. Lincoln done but little for the Negro race and from a living standpoint, nothing."

Now, there, of course, were other former slaves who praised Lincoln, who talked very glowingly about what they were doing when the word of emancipation came and how much they appreciated the sacrifice that Lincoln had made to them, but there was this other group who was beginning to think in the throes of depression that perhaps slavery was better than the freedom that they were experiencing at this time. And so this kind of attitude goes into the civil rights movement--two attitudes, actually. You've got the one group of African-American leaders who still recognize that Lincoln can be a powerful symbol to try to get white men to do the right thing, but you've got this other group who use Lincoln as--in telling African-Americans, "You don't need to give him any kind of deference anymore, any kind of respect. He was a white man who did nothing for us. We would've been better off had we paid more attention to John Brown, if we had revered John Brown." And, of course, they're two very different men with two very different perspectives. So, we get to the 1960s, and you have someone like the historian and journalist Lerone Bennett writing an article in "Ebony" magazine in which he asks, "Was Abe Lincoln a white supremacist"? And three decades later, he publishes a book, "Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream," and he says, "Absolutely he was." And so you had at this point, where are African-Americans on the issue of Lincoln today?

Well, I tried to do sort of an unscientific survey a few years ago, and I asked certain members of the African-American community what they thought of Lincoln, and I remembered one saying, "Well, you know, you think we just sit around and think about these presidents, you know. We don't do that, you know." And I think sometimes we can sort of get so caught up because we are so involved in study of Lincoln that we think the rest of the world is that caught up as well, and most people simply are not thinking anything of him.

There is no hostility, there's no cynicism, there's just indifference unless you show them that there's a reason to be involved. Now, in terms of my students, I'm always impressed with what they do--I teach a course in African-American history, and it's that first part of African-American history that ends in 1877, so we always cover the Civil War, and I always ask my students, "What do you think of Lincoln?" And they know that he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, they know that he saved the union, but beyond that, they don't have any really strong opinions, and I think it's because they do have their own heroes, and it's not like they think that Lincoln did anything that was wrong, just that he doesn't have any kind of place in their lives.

Now, of course, I'm a lot--a little older than they are, [Laughter] And I'm a child of the sixties, so when I was growing up, there was no picture of Lincoln in my house. Those pictures were very common in African-American households in the late 19th century and in the early 20th century. But in the 1960s, at least in my rural community, there were no images of Lincoln in our household. There were pictures of John and Jackie Kennedy, however, in my household, because that was something--what he was doing, the perception, at least, was that he was doing was something that was very important in our lives at that time. And even now, and my father, unfortunately, has died, but my mother still looks on Kennedy very fondly because the assumption is that he was responsible for the civil rights legislation. Poor Lyndon Johnson gets no kind of love at all. It's truly unfortunate.

But so I think it's not so much that African-Americans dislike Lincoln or anything like that. I think it's just that a lot of African-Americans don't see any relevance that he has in their lives, and I think, too, that part of it is that they really don't know the whole story any more than other Americans do. As Americans, we really don't know our history. Those of you who are here now, you're here because you know history and you love history, but I think most of our fellow citizens don't know history and don't really care to know history, OK?

But even know, even in 2008, you still have African-American leaders, especially politicians, who are more--I know my time has run out, so I'm wrapping up--who understand Lincoln's use as symbol. So, for instance, when Barack Obama announced his candidacy for president many, many months ago now, he chose the background of the old state house in Springfield where Lincoln had delivered his "house divided" speech 150 years ago. Well, yeah, he did it. For one reason, he did it is because he's from Illinois, but it's also because he recognized that Lincoln is still an important symbol in America, and I think it's also because he really does have a great deal respect for Lincoln.

Now, he talked about Lincoln's inconsistencies in a later article that he did for "Time" magazine, but like Du Bois, he also pointed out that these inconsistencies made Lincoln human, and it was the humanness, the man as opposed to the icon, that people need to pay attention to, and that he's a great leader because of those inconsistencies.

VORENBERG: Thank you.

[Applause]

I want to thank our panelists and I want to spend just 5 or 10 minutes--I'm gonna ask a couple questions of them, maybe just one if that goes they may have a lot to say about this and then I'll invite questions from the audience. One thing that occurred to me...on this issue of inconsistencies, and by the way, this isn't something I said I would be asking you, but now it came to me because it wasn't spoken of here, but I think a lot of people in the audience want to hear about it.

On the issue of inconsistency, something that's often brought up on Lincoln and emancipation is, well, if he was a champion of emancipation, or how can your reconcile Lincoln as an emancipationist with Lincoln the colonizationist? And so I wonder how you would all respond to this as a way to reflect on the issue of how this man, why this man supported colonization of African-Americans abroad...at a time when many white and, obviously, African-American reformers had given this up, and I wonder if you could all and then you don't have to. Anyone who wants to respond to that can go right ahead.

HORTON: OK. I'll just do this very briefly, and that is, you know, what you're pointing out is part of what made Lincoln difficult for African-Americans to deal with not only in the 20th century, but in the 19th century at the time.

For example, in his debate with Stephen A. Douglas for the Senate in Illinois in 1858, he said, among other things, he said, quote to you, he says, "I have no purpose to introduce political or social equality between the white and Negro races." Then he goes on to say that there are physical differences which make it difficult to impossible to do this. Now, it is out of that feeling that black people and white people are so different, he says, they can't really live together in equality, so that's part of his justification for pushing for colonization.

You know, before Frederick Douglass comes to the White House, Lincoln actually has 5 black leaders come to the White House, and he wants them there because he wants to talk to them about colonization, and it gets really controversial because towards the end of that conversation, he says to them, "You don't belong here. We are so different, you'd be better off in Africa." They reject that 100%. So, you can see how--Can you imagine how Frederick Douglass, who knows about all this, who has, in some cases, read some of these words, imagine how he feels when he goes to the White House to meet Abraham Lincoln and imagine how surprised he is when this President, who has said all these really racist things, who has said, black people need to go to Africa, you know, back to Africa--He's saying back to Africa to people who've never been to Africa in their lives.

At any rate, can you imagine how he feels when the President--He walks into the room where the President is sitting down, and the President stands up, calls him Mr. Douglass,

shakes his hand, shocked him because what he is expecting is the kind of person that these words indicate you're gonna meet, so the fact is that Lincoln does change. He changes in terms of his colonization stand, too. The last speech this man ever makes--in fact, this is the speech that gets him assassinated--the last speech he ever makes in '65, 1865, is when he says--and he's talking about Louisiana coming back, being reestablished in the nation and so on--he says, "You know, black people, especially those who are educated and those who have fought in the war, ought to have rights to vote, rights to be citizens."

Now, he's saying that when, in 1858, he has said, "I'm not gonna stand for and I'm not gonna support blacks as jurors, as voters, as citizens," but by the end of the war, he is saying, "You know, they ought to be citizens."

You know what has happened? He has felt and been very impressed with the role that black military men filled in defending the Union. He is changing, and so if you want to talk about his colonization stand, it has changed. By the end of his life, he's not pushing for colonization anymore.

WILLIAMS: Actually, John Hay, one of his private secretaries--a Brown University graduate, by the way--writes in his diary in 1864 that Lincoln had sloughed off, finally sloughed off this idea of colonization, and colonization, which may appear very offensive to us today, this was not a new phenomenon for Lincoln.

There was this American Colonization Society that antedated the Civil War by decades because there was a genuine feeling among very sophisticated, educated people that African-Americans would be better off outside of the confines of the United States. The big support for Haiti, for example, or Liberia was an outgrowth of that, but Jim is absolutely right. I think Lincoln grew, even when he's advocating colonization after issuing the Emancipation Proclamation and compensated emancipation. I think he finally did grow beyond that, knowing that you just couldn't send African-Americans willy-nilly back to Africa or in Central America where they tried this colonization project on the Chiriqui Peninsula that didn't work.

HORTON: And, you know, there are lots of Africans. 1860 is when the American Colonization Society was established. In the early 1820s, they established this colony which later, in the 1840s, it became the independent nation of Liberia, but there were African-Americans who actually went to this colony of "Liberia" back in the Twenties and the Thirties, and, you know, it's very interesting to observe the reaction of surrounding Africans, and what they found was, "These are Americans coming over here," and it's very interesting because you can see the very-- I think it's tempting for some people to say, "Oh, yeah. Well, you know, they're Africans, and they're Africans."

No, no. Africa is a very complex place and very, very differentiated in terms of the people there, and they recognized that these weren't African people. These were American people, and, you know, Frank was talking about Haiti. When Haiti was becoming independent, they needed settlers. They offered free land to African-Americans who would come and settle in Haiti, and thousands did, and Boyer--who, in the 1820s, was President of Haiti, he had a real problem because he says, "You know what? We offered these people free land. They come down here and act like Americans." What they do is, they settle on the land. They develop the land. They sell the land. They make big profits. They move into the cities, and they set up businesses. So, you know, this whole notion of colonization is very complex, and we need to understand that Africa is a very, very complex place. You don't understand that? Six times the size of Europe. If you think Europe is complex, think about how complex civilizations are from Northern Africa to Central Africa to Southern Africa. You know, you can take the United States and fit it inside the Sahara Desert. I mean, Africa is a very big, a very complex place.

VORENBERG: Yeah. Go ahead.

MEDFORD: May--Yeah, very briefly, I think that we have to remember that throughout much of Lincoln's career, he's very much influenced by Henry Clay. He very much admires Clay, and Clay was one of the founders of the American Colonization Society. I think what happens during the war, he's pushing this colonization because he's grasping for straws. He feels he's got to do something. He's got to solve this issue of slavery, but he knows that there are a lot of people who are not going to go along with him as long as they have to deal with a free African-American presence, and it's not just in the South, but it's in the North, as well.

What is unfortunate is that he doesn't understand, just as Jim said, that African-Americans are Americans. They're not Africans. They see themselves as African-Americans, and they're not about to give up the land of their birth to go to a place where they have no connection. Culturally, they're not Africans anymore, and I think that's what African-Americans--It's that kind of baggage that you bring to the study of Lincoln that African-Americans have to deal with when we are evaluating all of the events of the war.

VORENBERG: Thank you. The Archivist of the United States has a question for us.

WEINSTEIN: Well, it's not a question, actually, and I wasn't planning on saying anything. I came in about 20 minutes after the session began, so you may all have covered this before, but I don't think so. Let's start with the question of who Abraham Lincoln is. Vocationally, he's a politician, and he thinks in political terms, and I haven't heard that here in the last hour. I haven't heard the fact that--

HORTON: You missed it.

WILLIAMS: You missed it.

WEINSTEIN: I missed it? Well, then my apologies.

VORENBERG: You can't really say it enough, though. That's OK.

WILLIAMS: That's what you get when you don't come to court on time.

[Laughter]

WEINSTEIN: Judge, what do you get when you're busy doing your job to make certain that you folks have something to drink later? [Laughter] We'll take that back now. It's all right. Look. I haven't heard--maybe it was in the first few minutes--the fact that Lincoln basically had a mixture of perceptions of African-Americans. He was close to some. He participated, remember, all through the 1840s and 1850s. If you gave a reform convention anywhere on slavery, on temperance, on women's rights, on the treatment of people in insane asylums, whatever the subject was, you had Frederick Douglass there, and you had other African-American leaders there, and they were taking part in major ways. They were putting their cause forward, but they were working with others on other causes, and the fact is that this process segued naturally into the Republican Party's ranks.

Were the Republicans about as racist as Democrats? Sure, but it was to their advantage in the South during the Reconstruction era and afterwards to maintain themselves as, quote, "the party of Lincoln," and they did that. They didn't do it because, necessarily, of Lincoln. They did it because they wanted to have a powerful position themselves. This did not change in the late 19th century. It didn't change in the early part of the 20th century. You still find the Frederick Douglasses and the others accepting positions in Republican ranks going abroad as councilors and in different ways. It changes when the whole sea change in American politics takes place in the 1930s with the New Deal and the business of the folks who said, "We paid our debt. Let's move along," and so this is an important point to realize about the question of how people will perceive Lincoln. They perceived him, in large measure, in political terms, and until, say, the last 20 or 30 years, when the role of mythology, ideology, and who was gonna be using the Lincoln image for various things became a bit more complicated, but for a long period of time, the question was not so much what did you think of Lincoln. Oh, are you a Republican? Are you a Democrat? If you're Republican, you voted Republican. You thought Republican. Your grandparents had died in the Civil War or fought in the Civil War, at least. You had commitments.

If you're a Democrat, much the same thing, and I think we have to keep this in mind in terms of what I suppose you could call demythologizing our sense of Lincoln. He would've understood this current situation wonderfully. Obama could've used a terrific campaign manager Lincoln. I don't think he would've voted Republican, though you never can tell. He might've. He would try to get the best deal possible above all else for his party, and,

having said that, I apologize for the fact that all of this had been dealt with before I got here... [Laughter] and so I'll leave right now. Thank you.

WILLIAMS: Actually, Professor Weinstein, you raise a great point about the Republican versus the Democrat, and it should be noted, there are records that show how FDR, for example, and his speechwriters stole Lincoln from the Republicans. This is true, I mean, this evolution that you were speaking about and image and so on, being a Republican, but when the New Deal came, people like Robert Sherwood, the playwright and one of FDR's speechwriters, used this, used Lincoln for FDR and the Democrats, and this was big in the Thirties.

WEINSTEIN: Judge, why did they get away with it? They got away with it because the Republicans didn't control a single job.

WILLIAMS: Well, that's it. Right.

WEINSTEIN: The Democrats did. They controlled the purse strings. They had the ability to dole out money. They had the ability to assist in very tangible ways, and that was the beginning of the end for the Republicans and the African-American community.

MEDFORD: So, this idea of political theft is not new.

[Laughter]

VORENBERG: Other questions from the audience. I think I see some people. Yes.

MAN: I actually have a question. So, Professor Horton, you mentioned about Abraham Lincoln inviting those 5 African-American leaders to the White House. In Dr. James Oakes' new book, "The Radical and the Republican," he puts forth the idea that this is a publicity stunt and it's literally for PR measures. I was just curious if you could comment on that.

HORTON: That he was doing it for PR?

MAN: Yeah. It wasn't so much--

HORTON: You know, if you think about Abraham Lincoln inviting black people to the White House in 1862, 1863, 1864, and you think that's gonna give him good publicity...[Audience laughing] then you have to ask yourself this question-- how many black people are voting in those years? I mean, there are a few that are voting but relatively few.

VORENBERG: Could I--I think what you're saying, though, is that the PR comes in basically not the inviting of them to the White House but the denigrating of them in public that was then, as you said, earlier put in the papers, saying, "If not for you, we would not have civil war," and these sorts of statements that he made to them. That kind of PR.

MEDFORD: And trying to speak to the North, too, trying to tell Northern white men, "If we get rid of slavery, you won't have to worry about these people coming north because I'm gonna make sure that they're out of the country."

HORTON: Sure. You know, one of the things that happened during the 1860 election in New York State, the Republicans are obviously pushing Lincoln. On the same ballot for the presidential election, there is also a question of removing the property requirements for African-Americans to vote in the state of New York.

The property requirements had been dropped for voting for white people back in the twenties but remain on the books so that black people, in order to vote, they have to have a certain amount of property. Well, most black people don't have that much property, which means they don't vote. So in the sixties, one of the propositions is the removal. Well, the Democrats use that proposition to their advantage, and when they want to argue about whether or not you should, as a New Yorker, vote for Lincoln, they say, "Lincoln is gonna push for the end of slavery.

All those former slaves are gonna come north. They're gonna come to New York and take your jobs, and if you vote for black people having the right to vote, it will give the increasing black population substantial political power," and especially, they're saying this to the immigrants in New York.

I'm now talking specifically--well, specifically the Irish but also the Germans, although the Germans tend to be more--more willing to accept African-Americans, in large part because they're not in the same kind of economic competition with African-American workers as the Irish in New York at the time, but, I mean, that is one of the ways in which the politics of the North use race to their advantage. So I don't see the advantage of Lincoln then reaffirming that by establishing in the minds of Northern voters the fact that he has a real link with African-Americans.

In fact, he goes to great lengths to say he doesn't have. When Douglas is having his debate with Lincoln in 1858, one of the things he says to his audience, he says, "You know what? I have a picture in my head of Frederick Douglass riding in a carriage in New York City with two white women," and he says, "That's the kind of society Lincoln wants you to have." Now you can understand what position that puts Lincoln in, so I don't see that Lincoln is using that as a publicity stunt in that way.

VORENBERG: I see there are a lot of folks who want to ask questions. I'm gonna try to alternate left and right. So go right ahead.

WOMAN: Yes. I'd like to hear the panel's thoughts on how Lincoln is portrayed in emancipation art in terms of the images that were produced after the Emancipation was issued. Also, I'd like to hear your comments about--and I apologize. I don't remember the name of the book, but there was a dispute, I believe, between Douglass--Frederick Douglass and an African-American minister over these monies that were collected from former slaves toward the sculpting of the--

HORTON: Freedmen's Memorial.

WOMAN: Exactly. And just how that played out in terms of--there were disputes over how the image--how the images were going to be presented.

WILLIAMS: For the first part of your question about iconography, buy our book out there.

[Audience laughing]

All kidding aside, I wish Harold Holzer were here because he was the third author of "Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views," and his section was on emancipation prints, and we all know they didn't have electronic media in 1863 and following, but there was a whole series of prints that celebrated emancipation.

In fact, going back to what Edna alluded to, there were many African-American homes that would have a print, even though it was still visionary because their lifestyle hadn't changed that much, but the imagery and the vision, including the print of a black soldier boy coming home and being greeted in this very, very modest cabin by his family. All of that was portrayed in this iconography. Jim and Edna, I think, know more about the Freedmen's Monument scandal or alleged scandal than I do.

HORTON: By the way, if you haven't done this, go to Lincoln Park right here in D.C. and look at the Freedmen's Memorial. This is a statue of, presumably, a slave on his knees, being--breaking out of slavery, and he's being brought out of slavery by a Lincoln, who is standing above him, and in his hand is the Emancipation Proclamation.

The thing that's interesting is that memorial cost $17,000. Former slaves donated all of that money. In fact, I got a letter from a woman, who was a slave in Virginia, who was at this point living in Ohio, and she donated the first $5.00 that she made in freedom\ towards that memorial. So as I say, former slaves raised $17,000, and the U.S. Congress donated another $2,000, which was what the pedestal cost. You see it, it's on a high pedestal. So go and take a look at it, and incidentally, in February--I'm not sure the exact

date--but in February, there's going to be on PBS a program which will talk about that memorial.

In fact, I tell this story on that program, and we walk through the memorial, and it's a very interesting place to be. So I would advise you to go take a look.

MEDFORD: But it's my understanding that Charlotte Scott, the woman who donates the first $5.00 was not actually freed by the Emancipation Proclamation.

VORENBERG: That's true.

MEDFORD: She had been in Virginia, and her owner was a Unionist, and his neighbors made it so uncomfortable for him that he uprooted his family and moved to Ohio, taking her with them. Now of course she got her freedom that way. She chose to stay with the family, but this was a woman who had been held in slavery for 60 years, and she gets her freedom when her owner moves to Ohio, and perhaps she had no other means of support at 60, and especially 60 in those days meant pretty old. It doesn't anymore.

As I get closer to 60, I realize it's really a young age, but it's ironic, you know, that the person who offers the first $5.00 is someone who actually is not even freed by the Proclamation.

MAN: Between second Manassas and Antietam, I think, there was no other period in the war when foreign recognition of the Confederacy was more likely, and my question is in terms of the timing of the Emancipation Proclamation, to what extent was Lincoln influenced by the hope of winning popular opinion over in England and France and thus making recognition of the Confederacy diplomatically impossible?

WILLIAMS: Well, that question comes up a lot. I think little. There was a concern by him a lot more than today in this global village about reaction to the war abroad, especially with the great powers, England and France, but I don't think that was really motivating Lincoln that much on the issuance of the Proclamation.

HORTON: You don't think so?

WILLIAMS: I don't, no.

HORTON: Really?

WILLIAMS: But the reason--And I know people like--I need all the allies I can get here--people like Jim McPherson take the same view, that while it was an issue, it was not controlling.

HORTON: Oh. I mean, I agree with you. It was not the issue, but it was an issue, and the whole thing is that Britain and France were debating--and Germany, too--were debating the possibility of supporting the Confederacy. See, one of the things that the Confederacy had, which those states needed, those nations needed, was cotton, and there was this debate. In fact, there was going to be a meeting between France and England and Germany to really debate this issue about whether they should support the Confederacy.

Now the antislavery forces in those countries were important, and they could put pressure on the governments if they could make the point this is an antislavery war, but up until the Emancipation Proclamation, they couldn't make that point, but you realize that Antietam occurred, and after Antietam occurred, Lincoln made the announcement that there was going to be an Emancipation Proclamation, which was going to go into effect as of the first day of January of 1863.

When that announcement was made, France, Germany, and England called off their meeting. So--and never after that was there a serious effort in these European countries to support the Confederacy. The Confederacy was hurt by that. So as to whether it was the primary cause, I wouldn't argue that it was, but it certainly was important, and Lincoln was smart enough to know that this would have been a consideration.

MEDFORD: But keep mind that there is a difference between, for instance, the English people and the English government because the English government thought that he had lost his mind when he issued the Proclamation. They just thought he was an idiot.

The English people were absolutely delighted because they were wedded to a free labor system anyway. So if England is kept out of the war, it's because the English people rallied behind the Proclamation, not their government per se.

VORENBERG: I think I want to take just a couple more questions, but what you just said was that the English government would have thought he was out of his mind. I think that may surprise people, but I think you're absolutely right that they were concerned, and one of the reasons they were concerned is that the preliminary proclamation had this line in it that said that he expected slaves to take what measures--what steps they needed to to secure their own freedom.

Now this line in the preliminary Proclamation made people think, especially in England, in the English government, that this was a call for a race war, that this was a call by Lincoln for a race war, and it's because of that--they really were quite upset with this, the government--and it's because of that that the final Proclamation--you look at these phrases carefully, right, because the final Proclamation does not have that wording but instead says, "We urge and expect you freed people to labor faithfully for wages." In other words, to be good workers and not to rise up.

So the foreign issue was very much on his mind in this way, I think. Well, I just thought I'd bring that up, but other--yes. You have a question.

MAN: Uh, yes, I'm not here to ask a question but to make a statement which can be questioned, and before I make this statement, I want to proclaim and admit that I'm a left-wing sociologist. All right.

[Applause] [Laughter]

In the 21st Century...

VORENBERG: That's a bit redundant, but go ahead.

MAN: The party of Lincoln is the Democratic Party!

MEDFORD: Oh, today, today.

[Laughter] [Applause]

VORENBERG: Um, there is a pretty famous essay among Lincoln historians called "Getting Right with Lincoln" by David Donald in which he talks about the way-- and this has actually already been addressed by our panelists--that so many groups--political parties, African-Americans of one leaning or another--have always felt that you must get Lincoln on your side before you can move on. So I just say that that attitude, I suspect, has not died--ha ha ha--and that perfectly fair for the Democrats to claim Lincoln, but Lincoln was a Republican.

MEDFORD: But he would be a Democrat today.

[Laughter and applause]

VORENBERG: He would be a Democrat today, but would he have supported Hillary or Obama is the question, right, and that's--

MAN: Can I make a reply to that?

VORENBERG: Yeah. Ha ha ha!

MAN: I think that Lincoln should not be thought of as a Republican or a Democrat but a humanitarian.

VORENBERG: Yes. Therefore a Democrat.

[Laughter and applause]

VORENBERG: Sorry. Uh, yes. a question here.

WILLIAMS: If this were in my court, I'd have you sit down. Enough already with the politics.

MAN: Mine's just a simple, little question.

[Laughter]

Considering the wide range of opinions that were out there at the time that Lincoln was deciding whether or not to have an emancipation proclamation, did his decision, as far as we can tell from the record, come about--well, you know, on February, he was thinking this, in March, well, maybe April, he's still trying to make up his mind, or is there sort of an epiphany moment where he says, "By golly, the thing to do is an emancipation proclamation," that sort of—not necessarily overnight because obviously the issues were swirling around during all of this time, but was it more of a--back to Jim's] flip-flopping here--was he flipping at some point, or was it more like a Damascus Road experience?

WILLIAMS: In early 1862, he went to the funeral of his secretary of war's son. Edward--Edwin Stanton's boy died, and he mentioned that he was thinking about issuing an emancipation proclamation. Some were shocked at that, and then shortly thereafter, he had a draft. We place that in July of 1862 in which he read it to his cabinet. That's like a pre-preliminary proclamation. So there is a timeline that we can follow, and it was Seward and others who said that he should wait for a Union victory before issuing it. At least that's the story. I think there's some credence to that, and that's why September.

VORENBERG: That then leads to the question why would the death of Edwin Stanton's son matter, right? OK. And this is why I want to ask a question, which I guess I'm about to show my own opinion. Is there something--I guess I would ask you, Frank, and others--is there an epiphany moment that perhaps is attached to the death of Lincoln's own son Willie in February of 1862 such that he begins to see a certain price paid here, that the war takes on higher meaning for him, and so that the death of his friend Stanton's son then has this moment where he then goes public with this idea?

WILLIAMS: No recorded statements of his discussing it, and we--you may feel that that was part of this change, but the thing about Lincoln that some of us find continually fascinating is that as much as we know about him and this timeline for example of the death of Stanton's son or the death of Willie in February, Lincoln was a private person and an enigma, and he held many times his cards close to his vest, so it's very difficult to discern with accuracy what he was thinking at a particular time.

MEDFORD: I--I--

VORENBERG: Uh, last--

MEDFORD: If I may.

VORENBERG: Oh, I'm sorry.

MEDFORD: Just very briefly. I tend to see things a little bit more simplistically. I think there's a progression that starts not in 1862 but in 1861. Certainly by September of 1861, he's already trying to get the border states, to get rid of their slaves. He starts with Delaware. He's not successful there. Then by early 1862, he's pressing the other border states to do something. I think what happens is at some point he realizes that no one else is going to do it for him. He's losing the Union. The war's not going well. He has to do something, and so he takes this next step. I don't know that it's anything more than that, just realizing that this is not gonna change and he's gonna have to step up to the plate and do it himself.

HORTON: And the fact is that the war addresses his own uncertainties about whether he has the power to do it. The war says, "Yes, you do have the power to do it." And to make the point, he really does care about these people, who are held as slaves, getting their freedom. You know, before 1864, he was really concerned--he thought he might lose that 1864 election.

So at one point, he called Douglass--Frederick Douglass--to the White House again, and he says, "Frederick, I want you to do me a favor. I want you to go into--I want you to get the word into the South to all of the would-be slaves, who are still held in slavery, and I want you to tell them to get themselves to Union lines as fast as they can."

Why? Because he was afraid that if he lost this war--if he lost this election in 1864 that the new incoming president might nullify the Emancipation Proclamation, and therefore, all those slaves who had not gotten their freedom would never get their freedom. So it does make the point that he does care. I mean, he wasn't just doing this for the politics of it or for the show of it. He had some personal feelings, and the war allowed him to act on those personal feelings in a way that if there hadn't been a war I don't think he would have felt he could have.

VORENBERG: Thank you. I want to wrap this up. Just the last question, comment from the Archivist one more time.

WEINSTEIN: Two very quick points. The explanation for any changes in Lincoln on this issue might be simpler than we've been proposing. Presidents change their mind all the time, and we only have to look at Franklin Roosevelt, who enters the White House as a

believer in balanced budgets, as someone who had campaigned on that, and within in a year, we are running incredible deficits of one sort or another, and he's become a firm believer in that. So I see nothing--I see this as an evolution in Lincoln's thinking. Back in the dark ages when graduate schools were still producing plenty of scholars on this subject, there was a gentlemen named Otto Eisenschiml-- I don't know if any of you ever ran into Eisenschiml, but Eisenschiml was a scholar of military matters during the Civil War, and I've always when I have a chance to ask 3, 4 wonderful scholars on this whether there's any truth to the legend that we all heard about in graduate school that Eisenschiml, who was doing a paper at one of the historical meetings on Lincoln and his generals, came in, and the first sentence out of his mouth was the following. Forgive my accent. I don't mean to parody anybody, but Eisenschiml spoke with a very thick accent. [Austrian accent] "Lincoln was a great picker of lemons."

[Normal voice] And that was--his search for a general, as several of you have said already, was the major element in this whole process. If for any reason, Lincoln--it seems to me, if Lincoln had decided in the end not to go with Sherman, not to go with Grant, we would have a very different outcome in that situation, but anyway, thank you very much, and I'm sorry to take the time.

VORENBERG: Well, that could not have been a better statement in terms of a transition into transition to our third and final panel, which will be on Lincoln and the military, and so we will now have a short break. There are refreshments in the lobby. We invite you to go there, and I think my panelists for their wonderful insights.

[Applause]

WILLIAMS: Thanks, Edna. Always good.

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