

## Five things you should know about the Emancipation Proclamation

*Lincoln's most profound contribution to African American History  
reveals his military mind at work*

“Upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution . . . I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.”

-- From Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation

February 12, 2008 (DALLAS) — It's appropriate that Abraham Lincoln's birthday falls within Black History Month, since no other presidency is so tightly woven with African American history. After all, it was Lincoln's stance on slavery that propelled him (and the new Republican Party) to the White House, an election that would drive the nation to Civil War and the ultimate abolition of slavery.

The Emancipation Proclamation is a tangible artifact of Lincoln's role in black history. Baruch College historian Carl Rollyson says that the proclamation's context and history reveal much not only about Lincoln's priorities but also about his military mind at work. Rollyson analyzes the Emancipation Proclamation in *Milestone Documents in American History* (Schlager Group, 2008), where he notes that Lincoln used the proclamation as a military weapon, ensuring a win for the North, preservation of the Union, and abolition of slavery. He says that five key points—not always proud moments—reveal how Lincoln used the proclamation as a tool to vanquish the southern rebellion.

**1. It wasn't the first.** Although Lincoln was under pressure to abolish slavery nationwide, he rescinded an earlier proclamation of emancipation issued by a Union commander, ensuring that border slave states like Maryland and Missouri wouldn't defect to the Confederacy.

**2. It didn't free *all* slaves.** Lincoln freed slaves in *Confederate states*. Slaves in the border states within the Union remained the property of their owners. Lincoln kept Maryland and Missouri fighting for the North by exempting them from the proclamation.

**3. Timing was everything.** Lincoln's aim was to cause disruption behind Confederate lines, inspiring slaves to desert their masters and join the Union cause. He waited until the tide turned in the North's favor and issued the proclamation just after the Union army's success at Antietam.

**4. It built up the troops.** The proclamation had enormous symbolic meaning because for the first time it made slavery itself one of the primary issues of the war. At the same time, however, this ideological precedent led some 200,000 black soldiers and sailors to enlist in the Union army and navy.

**5. It kept the Europeans out.** Lincoln feared European recognition of the southern rebellion as legitimate. However, with the proclamation's establishment of slavery as the

primary issue of the war, European intervention on the South's behalf would, in effect, be a vote for slavery.

To read the full text of the Emancipation Proclamation, visit [schlagergroup.com](http://schlagergroup.com).

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