DAVID REYNOLDS

LINCOLN'S DILEMMA

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David Reynolds Interview

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Interviewed by Jackie Olive & Barak Goodman

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Lincoln's 1861 speeches

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

In 1861, he varied his speeches because he was on his train trip, very long train trip from Springfield, where he lived, to Washington, where he was going to assume office. And he made many, many stops along the way. He was testing and hedging. And he was in such an unusual circumstance where Southern states had already started to secede and lead the Union. And at that point, he wasn't quite sure how to respond. And so at first, he was quite tough in his speech in Indianapolis, where he really denounced secession. That was considered too forceful, controversial. And then he backed off a little bit and

he said, "Well, actually, if everybody just holds their temper on both sides and quiets down and just become peaceful, then maybe we can ease the situation."

DAVID REYNOLDS:

When he got to Philadelphia, he gave an incredible speech in which he said he was inspired by the fact that that's where the Declaration of Independence had been signed. And he said, "I would give up anything, I would allow myself to be assassinated on the spot, killed on spot before I would give up the ideal of human equality under the Declaration of Independence." There was a lot of variety in those speeches. And also, in many, many stops, he just didn't prefer to say anything except maybe tell a little joke or something, because it was such an uncertain situation at that point.

How Lincoln spoke to his audience

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

He would vary his speeches according to his audience. He had been very accustomed to doing that in the Lincoln Douglas debates where he had sounded more anti-slavery in the Northern part of the state. And in the Southern part of the state, he was sound a little more conservative because he had to attract voters. So he had to play a balancing act. He was a real politician. So he did, as he was going across the country, also adapt his speeches to various audiences. And it was very, very hard because in the first inaugural address, which he gives after his train trip, it's a very balanced

speech with part of it sounding extremely tough to the South, but part of it's sounding quite conciliatory in the sense of saying, "Well, we can't be enemies. We have to be friends. The mystic chords of memory combine us in patriotic togetherness. And we should listen to the better angels of our nature."

DAVID REYNOLDS:

On the other hand, he does say, "If you take over the forts in the South, we're going to have to hold the forts." So he was both very tough and also conciliatory. So he really had to balance and calibrate his speeches.

Lincoln-Douglas debates

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

The Lincoln Douglas debate secured in 1858, and Lincoln for four years had been speaking in Illinois about slavery against slavery. However, the Lincoln Douglas debates in the fall of 1858, 7 of them throughout Illinois, gave him a venue against Stephen A Douglas, who was a Senator who was so immensely well-known. At the time, Lincoln was not well-known. But these debates were reported very, very widely, very widely. So it elevated Lincoln to a national visibility, and it also defined the differences over slavery. Douglas was an unabashed white supremacist. He said, very specifically, "American government should forever be in the hands of white men," as he called them, "and citizenship must be restricted to white people. And slavery, well, who really cares whether it's voted up or voted down. I don't really care. We shouldn't care." Lincoln said exactly the opposite. He said, "Black people are

due all the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness under the Declaration of Independence."

DAVID REYNOLDS:

He said that slavery is not only wrong, but there's an eternal antagonism between good and bad from the very beginning of time, and slavery is on the bad side. It's a very, very sharp, moral division. And by making this point on a national venue, because these debates with Douglas were reported everywhere, he really becomes elevated in the national consciousness. He's still something of a dark horse going into 1860, but he faces Stephen Douglas and two other candidates who were opposed to him, and Lincoln manages to win that election largely on the basis of getting known through the 1858 debates.

The Confederate cause

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

The Confederate cause was states' rights in defense of slavery was not states' rights alone. It was the belief in the liberty of each state to defend the institution of slavery. And the Confederacy formed its own nation, as it thought itself. It had his own Congress, its own president, its own laws, its own constitution. It was based on the belief of the so-called inferiority of Black people, who should be held in slavery, according to the Confederacy. So that was basically the Confederate cause.

The evolution of the Confederacy's cause

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

There was an evolution over the Civil War that resulted from the fact that the Confederacy became even more devoted to its cause. Not less devoted, but more devoted to its cause. And in result of the so-called invasion of the South, by the North, the war itself only generated more pro-Confederate and pro-slavery feeling in the South.

Alexander Stephens

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Alexander Stephens is saying here that, "We, here in the South, are defending our homes. Our families, our wives and daughters, we're fighting for our Homeland, and Lincoln can send 70,000 troops and maybe 100,000 more and on and on and on. We are going to fight until the bitter end, because our territory has been invaded."

The Confederacy's strategy

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Even though the Confederacy in general remained strong and ideologically actually grew stronger in trying to defend itself, there was dissension. There

was growing frustration over the military strategy of Jefferson Davis. There was some bickering within the Southern cabinet about how to conduct military strategy. The economy was in shambles by the end of the war. And there was tremendous inflation because the Confederate money became... Well, now it's almost like play money. It became almost worthless because it became contingent on the fact that the Confederacy would win the war. The economy was bad. And also, there was such a paucity, a dearth of simple food, of bread, and there was a lot of illness and everything. With all of that, I must repeat that the ideology of the South remained very, very strong, and if anything, grew even stronger, despite all the bickering and despite all the disappointments and all of that.

If the South won the war

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

If the South had won the war, slavery would have lasted, I believe, until the late 19th and possibly early 20th century. I believe there would have been yet another war over slavery. But if the South had been allowed to keep slavery by some kind of peace deal or something, I think eventually, the agricultural and cotton based economy of the South was going to change, and I believe that it probably wouldn't have outlasted the early 20th century.

Jefferson Davis

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Jefferson Davis wanted to fight to the last, even if it meant fighting to the very death of many, many, or most Southern people. And it shows you how powerful that Confederate ideology was. And it remained then after that, after the war, even 15 years after the war, Jefferson Davis looked back and said African servitude, as he called it, was really the greatest relationship between Black people and white people that can be imagined. That was 15 years... He never really learned his lesson.

Southerners' views

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Most Southerners were in lockstep with the Confederate goal. Not totally, because there were pockets of unionism and pro-Northern feeling in the South. There was even a state called the state of Jones that broke off that was against the Confederacy. So there were pockets. But in general, even non-slave owners in the South, and there were a lot of non-slave owners in the South, supported the Confederate ideology. The South, at that time, had a big sense of honor, chivalry, and what we might call pseudo manliness and all of that and defending your home, and that played right into the Confederate ideology.

The Emancipation Memorial

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

The Emancipation Memorial shows Abraham Lincoln with one hand on the Emancipation Proclamation and the other extended toward an enslaved man who's below him and rising up. And it was removed from Park Square in Boston because it was considered demeaning to the enslaved men. However, let's recall that statute was funded by the first $5 earned by Charlotte Scott, a washer woman in Ohio who had been enslaved in Virginia, the very first $5 that she earned as a freed woman. She said, "I'm going to put it toward a statute for Abraham Lincoln, and it can be funded only by Black people." They raised $1,700 solely from Black people. And in midstream, the design of the statue was changed to get the Black person in the statue more agency. Originally, the enslaved man was shown with a liberty cap on his head. They said, "No, no, no, no, no." And in the final version, he's breaking his chains from his hands. He's very muscular and he's rising on the balls of his feet, almost like a sprinter approaching the block."

DAVID REYNOLDS:

And then when it was unveiled, the statue, in 1876, it was organized by African-Americans, the ceremony, attended by 20,000 mainly African-American people. And Frederick Douglass gave a speech in which he held Lincoln as a president who could seem slow and cautious on slavery, but given the temper of his time, was swift, radical, and determined, given the time in which he lived. It's an important statue. And to be sure, it should be accompanied by a historical explanation wherever, because the original is in Washington. There's a copy in Madison, Wisconsin. The one in Boston has been removed, but I think it should be restored.

Thomas Ball

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Thomas Ball, who was a famous sculptor of the time, was commissioned to sculpt the Emancipation Memorial, and the original casting of it is in Washington. And there are copies of it in Boston. That one was removed in December of 2020. And there's another copy in Madison, Wisconsin. Portrayed on the statue is an enslaved man breaking through his chains, and he is based on the last fugitive slave who was captured. His name was Archer Alexander. And when Archer Alexander saw the statue, he was thrilled by it. He was delighted by it. He saw himself. He was quite a muscular man. He saw himself bursting apart the chains. And he said he was very, very happy that he would be forever associated with Lincoln on this statue.

December 2020 protests and removal of Emancipation Memorial

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

The Boston statue was taken down in December, 2020 because the art council there decided to remove it as a result of growing protest over the statue, because it allegedly showed African Americans as being in a lower position than Lincoln and not giving Black people enough agency in their own emancipation. It was thought to place too much emphasis on Lincoln and not

enough emphasis on the efforts of Black people themselves to gain emancipation.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

The mayor's protest against the statue does not take into context the background of the statues sufficiently. From our perspective, we can look back in the 19th century and we just can't find anybody or anything that is totally in accord with our political standpoints. You can look everywhere and then not find anything. The statue, at the time, represented activity. It was changed in midstream to give the Black man more agency. The original version of it with the liberty act was considered too passive. The guy was just crouching there with a Liberty cap on his head. Said, "No, no, no, no, no. We have to make hm much more active, much less passive." So in that sense, I disagree with the mayor.

Political beliefs today

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

We can look very long and very hard and not find anybody that totally would fit in with our political beliefs today. Why? We have come quite a long way, even though we have quite a long way to go, we have come quite a long way since that period. So that one can cherry pick Lincoln, one can cherry pick Frederick Douglass, one can cherry pick John Brown. These are all people who hated slavery. They hated slavery. And yet, some of their comments wouldn't necessarily fit into what is politically correct today. And the same is

true about Theodore Parker, who was this very, very ardent anti-slavery person. Oh my goodness gracious. He was a minister and he was so supportive of African Americans. And yet, he said certain things about the superiority of the Caucasian race and everything. Civil rights is not a highway leading forward. People inch along and they go back and they go forward and inch back inch forward. And you just cannot impose today's values on the past.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

I think that with Confederate monuments, that's a little different, because the Confederacy really was fighting for the defense of slavery. And it seems to me slavery, even back then and today, is considered unjust. But among the anti-slavery crowd, there was such a massive variety of different opinions. John Brown, who gave his life for enslaved people. Frederick Douglass says, "I can live for the slave. John Brown died for the slaves." And yet, he's somewhat controversial because he murdered some pro-slavery people. He took extra legal, went outside the law, to make this point of view. You find so many wrinkles in people back then, and it's true about the statue. Douglass said about the Emancipation Memorial, "I wish the guy were standing." But he said, "For this time, I get the point of the Emancipation Memorial, and it would be nice if we could have another statue with the enslaved person really standing up with Lincoln." But he took the statute for what it was.

Frederick Douglass' perspective on the Emancipation Memorial

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Douglass is commenting on the Emancipation Memorial and saying that what we have here is an image of an enslaved person who is still crouching without much clothing. I would like to see a statue of someone who's erect and proud and much more looking like a citizen. He did say elsewhere that, "Okay, the statute does represent a certain time and temper." And when the statute was conceived by Charlotte Scott, it was in 1865, just after Lincoln had died. And there was this magnification of Lincoln. And then it took 11 years to do the statue, and Thomas Ball worked on it.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

But then what happened in those 11 years, of course, is that Reconstruction happened. And by the end of Reconstruction, African Americans have become very frustrated, very frustrated. And this idea of the Emancipation, in a way, it's not that it was old fashioned. It was just that there was such disappointment by Southern redemption at the end of Reconstruction and the resurgence of white supremacy. So the statue of then, Douglass really is looking to and calling for a more assertive expression of the African American presence, than in this somewhat antiquated vision of the enslaved person rising up, which indeed spoke to 1865, but not quite so much to 1876 when the statue was unveiled.

African Americans' contributions

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Douglass is attributing emancipation to first, Lincoln, and then citizenship to Grant. It is true that Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and supported the 13th Amendment and Grant supported the 15th Amendment. That's true, but we also have to realize the contributions, and Frederick Douglass did himself recognize the contribution, even though it doesn't come out in this quotation, the contribution of so many African Americans, not just the African American soldiers during the Civil War, but the African Americans during Reconstruction, particularly those very bold Black people in Southern areas that were elected. They ran for office and they were elected. And there was a period during Reconstruction where there was quite a lot of activity, politically, by African Americans. And they indeed were part of the upsurge toward the 15th Amendment, which gives the vote to Black people.

Achievements during Reconstruction

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

There was a period early in Reconstruction when scores of African American politicians, particularly in the South, were elected to office, to state office, some of them to the House of Representatives. And there was a real uptick in political involvement and political achievement early in Reconstruction. Unfortunately, what happens is white supremacist groups really instituted backlash against that, and there's a repression of the African American vote. There's a lot of tension. President Grant does what he can to try to suppress the Ku Klux Klan, and indeed it is. And yet, this white supremacist reaction does take over so that by the end of Reconstruction, there is, I wouldn't say

retreating, because it wasn't a retreating, it was a real suppression of Black voting and Black participation. And then not too long after that, you get Jim Crow America and you get legalized segregation. You get lynching. And it's really not until the 1950s with Brown V Board and then everything after that, that then you've got a backlash against that.

The Confederacy strategy in 1864

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

By early 1864, the Confederacy had become desperate and angry, and it was largely a race based anger. Because by that time, it had been nearly a year in which African Americans had been fighting for the North, which, for the South, was a complete violation of racial hierarchy. The South refused to exchange Black prisoners because they believed that Black people were their property and could be treated however they wanted to treat them. And in battle, the Black soldiers had proven for the North to be extremely heroic, just as heroic as any other soldier. And the Confederacy became so angry about this that at several battles, particularly Fort Pillow, Black soldiers that were either captured or trapped were just slaughtered, they were slaughtered. And this was very much a racially motivated anger on the part of the Confederates.

Aftermath of Lincoln's assassination

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Immediately after the assassination, grief and mourning overwhelmed Washington DC, where the flags were at half mast, the bells were tolling, the buildings were draped in black. Thousands of people went by the coffin of Lincoln, the open coffin, first in the White House, then in the Capitol rotunda. And in the South, there was even a certain amount of mourning there. And I think the mourning in the South really came from just total shock. Everyone was totally stunned. And a certain grief even overcame parts of the South, but particularly in the North.

Racist treatment of Black people

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Black people were treated, in popular culture, before the Civil War, in a very caricatured and very demeaning fashion. They were portrayed as ignorant, laughable, comical, lazy, docile. And in menstrual shows, they were very severely caricatured and made fun of. And in science, we would call a pseudo science, such as ethnology and phrenology, a supposedly physical difference between Black people and white people was allegedly proved by science. And this idea of physical difference would actually last into the late 19th and early 20th century and feed into eugenics as well. As I say, it was a very, very disturbing cultural and pseudoscientific demeaning of Black people.

Different types of Confederates

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

They were all shades of Confederates. And a difference between two Confederates might be between Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy, and Nathan Bedford Forrest. Forrest really had a commercial view of African Americans because he became a millionaire before the Civil War by trading in Black people. And during the Civil War, he permitted his soldiers to slaughter hundreds of captured Black soldiers at Fort Pillow. Then after the Civil War, he became the first grand wizard of the KKK. So he's one of the founders. And really, this idea of terrorizing African Americans was a big deal to him. And he really had a terribly white supremacist view. Davis viewed himself as a benevolent patriarch and slaveholder, although frankly, underneath he wasn't that much different. But he put on this air of being this benevolent slaveholder.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

He was very, very firm, however, Davis, in protecting states' rights in order to protect slavery. And when Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, Davis says, "This is the most damnable document that has ever appeared." And he said, "It's only going to make enslaved people rise up and assassinate, in mass murder, white people." Then after the war, Davis said, "Well, Black people, it was better for them to be held in slavery. And after the war, we should continue to suppress them. No, they shouldn't be able to vote. No, no, no, no, no. They don't have enough intelligence to vote." So Davis really was thinking in terms of the politics. He was a little less maybe into the

terrorizing and the physical violence suppression than Nathan Bedford Forrest. Forrest was really very much into that.

Civil War memorials

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Both the Confederate memorials and the Lincoln Memorial, and most of the memorials to the Union soldiers, were the product of the Jim Crow era. And I'm not saying they're similar, but they do isolate certain heroes of the Civil War on both sides, because there was an instinct to try to reunify the North and the South. And in a sense, when you make a monument of someone, whether it be Robert E. Lee, whether it be Lincoln, a Union general, or Nathan Bedford Forrest became a real hero in the South. But if you put them in these beautiful marble statues, there's something almost that invites the no matter whether you're a pro-South or anti-South or pro-slavery, it invites you to admire that statue. That statue looks quite heroic and there's Robert E. Lee and he looks grand. Then he said, "Oh, he was fighting to defend slavery." Well, anyway, it's a nice statue.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

So any of these statues in a way we're products of Jim Crow to some degree. And the Lincoln Memorial was a symbol of attempted reunion and unity. It has 36 columns, representing the 36 states in 1865. It combines the states because there's Georgia marble from which the statue of Lincoln itself is made. There's Massachusetts granite. There's Indiana limestone. There's

Alabama marble in there on the ceiling. So bringing all the states together, both in the stones and in the columns, again, as an act of unity and bringing formerly hostile sections together.

The original plan of Reconstruction

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

The original plan of Reconstruction, which was devised mainly by radical Republicans in Congress, was to break the South into military districts in which you would try to advance education for African Americans, and eventually in time, after about five years of Reconstruction, political advance for African Americans, according to the 14th and 15th Amendments. And it worked for a while. However, there was this Southern backlash against Reconstruction. The recurrence and resurgence of white supremacy in the South. The same time, the North became slowly a little less engaged in helping out African Americans in the South, so that even though there were some radical Republicans still left over, eventually you had the abolishment of the Civil Rights Act in the early 1880s. Then you have the rise of Jim Crow and you had Plessy V Ferguson in 1896, which legalizes segregation.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

So there's this initial thrust movement toward helping out African-Americans followed by a real reaction and a retraction away from that. And it was all speeded in the early 20th century by films like the Birth of the Nation in which they picture early reconstruction with African-Americans in Congress

and all of that as being a nightmarish time, it was a horrible time. And at the end of that movie, the KKK come in on their horses and they saved imperiled white women who are supposedly about to be raped by African-Americans. It's a very, very white supremacist movie, but that was a symbol of the kind of early 20th century Jim Crow mentality.

Life for African Americans in 1919

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

In 1919 in a number of cities throughout the nation, African-Americans were forced to leave their homes and in many cases were lynched. And we have to recall that 1919 was really in the depths of Jim Crow America. And it was just on the cusp of the 1920s when you had the rise and resurgence of the KKK, Ku Klux Klan, in a very, very big way. So in a sense, I view those pogroms as in a way the rebirth of the KKK mentality, the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan mentality.

Charles Blondin

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Charles Blondin was a visiting, touring tightrope walker from France. And in 1859, he went back and forth across Niagara Falls, 1200 feet, no net. Forward, backwards, with a man on his back, on stilts, at night in chains, pushing a wheelbarrow. And he was just incredible. And a lot of cartoonists suddenly

realized this is Lincoln. This is exactly what Lincoln is doing. And Lincoln himself caught onto it too and more than once said, I'm Blondin.

Lincoln's similarities to Charles Blondin

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Lincoln was a politician. And he knew that the very worst thing that you can do in a deeply divided time is to inflame either side. On one side, Lincoln was being called a dangerous radical who was going to cause a racial reversal in America. On the other side, he was being called too cautious, too slow on slavery. But the reason he got elected twice was that he appealed to the broad, fairly moderate general public by being Charles Blondin, by staying close to the center.

Lincoln as a politician

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Lincoln was a politician. Unlike so many other well-motivated reformers and orators over time, he tried to work within the system that we have. The founding fathers gave us a system, it's called elections. To win elections, you have to win votes. To win votes, particularly in a very deeply divided time, it helps to win the broad public by achieving a centrality. And remaining firm to your principles, but at the same time, not saying things that are going to alienate broad slaths of the public.

Lincoln's caution

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

We have to understand that he had to act more cautious than he actually felt inwardly. Frederick Douglas once said, "Well, a lot of abolitionists thought that he was rather slow and cautious on slavery, but you know what, given the temper of his time, he was absolutely radical, swift, determined on ending slavery." And that's the way we should view him that he had to yes, act and behave cautiously quite often. And even sometimes speak cautiously, but underneath, he was always pushing for the end of slavery, pushing for emancipation. And believing fundamentally in his gut that the Declaration of Independence with its proclamation of inalienable rights for all applied to African-Americans and people of all races, not just to white people.

The image of Lincoln on a tightrope

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

The image of the tightrope was often applied to Lincoln and he applied it to himself because he had to straddle the line between, on the one hand, radical abolitionism, and on the other hand, between conservatism and a backward view of race and slavery. He had to straddle that line. And quite often it was very, very tricky, particularly when he was a politician running for office and trying to win votes.

Lincoln's views on colonization

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Lincoln saw colonization along with many, many other people of his time, as one way of relieving the slavery situation. For him, it was mainly a means of playing to the more cautious people among his audience. He was a politician. He had to appeal to them. And colonization came out of him in moments when things were especially tense and he really needed to soften the blow. For example, he had already prepared the Emancipation Proclamation in July, 1862. And so then he mentions colonization to visiting delegation of blacks in the White House, knowing all the while that when he issues the Emancipation Proclamation, it's going to create like a bomb, which it did particularly among moderates of the time.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

And there were two basic programs of colonization. One advocated mainly by white people, anti-slavery people. And one promoted by African-American leaders who believed that racism was so endemic in America that African-Americans should voluntarily leave and go elsewhere. And he actually drew from both programs, but his longest discussion in a speech on colonization which was in 1854, Peoria, he mentions colonization in Liberia. But in the next breath, he says, actually, America's shipping resources just, it would be virtually impossible for this to happen. And he also said also within

10 days of the African-Americans arriving in this foreign nation, they would likely die.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

And it is very true that in the end, between 1816 when the American Colonization Society was founded and 1865, some 13,000 people were removed. Almost nothing came of it. And then during his presidency, yeah, there were two programs. One was 500 African-Americans who it was planned to take them down to Panama then called Chiriquí. Another plan to take an equal number down to Île à Vache island off of Haiti, off of Haiti. And neither program panned out. And not long after he met with the blacks in which he had recommended emigration, he canceled the program for Panama. And then the next year he dissociated the government from that.

Lincoln on colomization

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

I believe that colonization for him was a possibility, but a near impossibility. Because he would bring it up only to shortly thereafter question it as he did in Peoria or undercut it as he did after he met with the blacks in 1862, when he canceled a couple of programs for colonization after which he never publicly mentioned it again. So yeah, I think that it was largely an effort on his part to strike a public pose of moderation and to persuade the slave holding states to emancipate. And therefore after that, the African-Americans will be removed. Although not really. Lincoln never imagined colonization as

anything but voluntary, not forced. It had to be a decision on the part of Black people themselves.

Lincoln's contradictions

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

Colonization he knew had been a very popular idea. Nothing much ever came of any colonization plan. And he knew that too, so he knew of its impossibility. And he tended to bring it out at particularly tricky moments for the sake of political convenience and a way of softening the blow of certain other things that he was involved in.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

He was a politician who was not above using what he had to use to bring the country along with him.

Letter to Horace Greeley

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

The letter to Horace Greeley was an example of Blondin, very balanced, because he said, Well, if I could save the union, I would free all the slaves, if I could say the union without freeing any slave, I'd do that. We have to remember, he already had the Emancipation Proclamation drafted. And it's in that period between July and September, when he relishes the preliminary

Emancipation Proclamation, right in that period, that he makes all these kinds of public swings to the right. Why? Because he knows the Emancipation Proclamation is going to really outrage moderates. And it did. It prompted such a racist backlash against Lincoln. Black people were thrilled, abolitionists were thrilled. But it was kind of a bomb, the Emancipation Proclamation. And he knew that was coming. And so, yeah. Oh, if I could free all the slaves, fine. If I can't free any slaves that's okay, too. And by the way, you delegation of, you know, visiting Black people, I think that maybe you should voluntarily want to leave once you're free. He was softening the blow.

DAVID REYNOLDS:

He also told a group of Chicago ministers who said, Where's the Emancipation Proclamation? He says, Emancipation Proclamation, that would do no good. That would do no good whatsoever. It would be like a Pope issuing an edict against a comet. And he said, That would have no .... Meanwhile, he was just on the verge of issuing. He had to try to soften the blow.

George McClellan

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DAVID REYNOLDS:

George McClellan considered enslaved people the property of the South. Shouldn't be touched in battle. Shouldn't be taken away. And personally, on race, he once said, I do not like the odor of billy goats and, then he used the N word. And he said, I feel that my race is definitely superior. And this fed into

his military timidity. He said, Oh, I prefer a civilized form of warfare. But for him, civilized meant not thinking about emancipating enslaved people whatsoever. Not fighting for that end whatsoever. No. And not even tampering too much with the Southern property. So that's one reason why he was a rather halting general on the battlefield.

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