

The United States of America's Long Journey: The Concept of Equality in America from 1619-1863

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Academic Setting

Garfield Middle School is an inner-city school with 70.7% of our students eligible for free lunch services. Eighty-one percent of the students are Hispanic (of these 15% are LEP — Limited English Proficient), approximately 13% are Anglo, 4% American Indian, just over 1% are Black, and .3% are Other. While approximately two thirds of our students qualify for Title I services (a federally funded reading program), we currently service less than twenty five percent of those qualified. Our students are reading on average twoReturno grades below their current grade level. The school is under school improvement in two areas: math and reading. Results from this year's (March 2000) Terra Nova testing show that both sixth and eighth grade student scores in English, math, social studies and science have dropped across the board as compared to last year's Terra Nova results. This was the first year of Terra Nova testing for seventh graders. In only one category was the score above the 50 percentile for the entire school. This was in the section titled Language (not to be confused with Language Mechanics) in which seventh graders scored in the 51 percentile.

In addition to being a Title I school, we also receive funding as a bilingual school. Many of our monolingual and LEP students have a difficult time in the subjects that require much reading. This past year Garfield Middle School initiated Reading Renaissance, an Accelerated Reader program to encourage students to read more books. Though it does not help them gain specific reading skills and improve reading comprehension in a systematic manner, it does seem to stimulate them to read more through incentives and awards.

Things for the Teacher to Consider

1. This unit will be used primarily in the eighth grade enriched language arts class, and portions of it may be used in the drop-out prevention class. Since primary sources will be read in class and for homework, it will be necessary to carefully consider the reading and comprehension level of your students. Those students with lower reading levels may need extra help. It is recommended that adequate class time be allotted for in-depth discussions.

2. Albuquerque Public School District is divided into several clusters. A cluster consists of one high school, two to three middle schools, and several elementary schools. The elementary school students feed into the middle schools in that cluster, while the middle school students feed into the single high school in the cluster. The Valley Cluster Teachers' Forum is a collaborative effort on behalf of

the cluster's language arts teachers and our goal is to coordinate the English curriculum across the grade levels. Two years ago it was decided that English teachers at the middle school level should focus on getting students to write quality paragraphs. The middle school student will have exposure to essay writing, but the main focus is good paragraph development. Therefore, the lesson plans in this unit will not involve extensive pieces of writing nor a research paper.

Goals and Objectives of the Unit:

1. To read the Declaration of Independence in its entirety.
2. To read parts of the Constitution.
3. To make clear the conflict that was taking place between those who believed in the supremacy of states rights and those who wanted a stronger, more centralized government.
4. To make clear how the issue of slavery was initially a matter of state sovereignty over governmental interference, but became a moral issue with the election of Abraham Lincoln as president.
5. To read one to three middle school novels that are related to the unit either directly or indirectly. Some possibilities include: *The War Between the Classes*, *Something Upstairs*, *Slave Dancer*, *The Blazing Hills*, *My Brother Sam is Dead*, *Jump Ship to Freedom*, *Red Badge of Courage*, *A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl's Journal, 1830-1832*, *Caddie Woodlawn*, *Rifles for Watie*, *This Strange New Feeling*, *Sarah Bishop*.
6. To engage students in discussions of the issues presented in the readings, and to have them write a few opinion pieces, an essay or two, and to write journal entries, letters and poems in which they write from the perspective of a historical person

Narrative

An Uncommon Idea

The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence begins with: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these, are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That, to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the consent of the governed. That, whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness...."

"That all men are created equal..." is a phrase whose meaning has been debated in one guise or another for a long time. What did it mean to those who wrote our Declaration of Independence? How has its meaning broadened over time? What was the impact of slavery on this concept in the South? Who have been some of

the most vocal and passionate debaters, or defenders, of its broader interpretation? Has any progress been made in terms of how various ethnic, religious, social and gender groups are treated? Why is this concept of the inherent equality of all men so important, so necessary, for democracy to work?

All Are Not Created Equal

That all men are not created equal has been a fundamental idea of mankind for a long long time. It is the notion underscoring man's inhumanity to man over the millennia whether we are talking about war, ethnic cleansing, torture, slavery, or other forms of violence carried out in the name of religion, tribalism, or nationalism. Moreover, people should recognize that the ownership of one individual by another has a long history in the affairs of mankind as well. Ownership or economic control could be in the form of master to slave, feudal lord to peasant, squire to indentured servant, or landowner to sharecropper. And though recognizing that each type of relationship had precepts governing it, it was still the case that a perceived fundamental difference existed between the inhabitants of each group. They were not deemed equals, and this is a necessary mindset to maintain in order to preserve the situation.

Mankind's history is replete with examples of his subjugation of those whom he considered inferior for one reason or another. In some places at specific times one's slaves or indentured servants were treated with some modicum of respect, and had limited rights or at least were protected from certain kinds of treatment at the hands of his or her master. For example, in Ancient Greece the lower classes consisted of freemen — who were primarily sustenance farmers, stone workers, metal workers and artisans — and slaves. The lives of some slaves was comparatively easy. Many had been captured in war and therefore were of equal status to their masters. The only difference was that the captive had lost the war and thereby his freedom. Some slaves went on to attain respected positions in civic and economic affairs; "sometimes they were virtually adopted by their masters and ceased to be his slaves in all but name." (Wolfson, 1902, p.68) In the Roman Empire slaves and freedmen made up more than half the entire population of Italy, especially as Rome waged wars against a number of countries whose captives were taken to Rome as slaves. These slaves were entrusted with a number of tasks ranging from "teachers and doctors, they were the accountants and clerks, they were the household servants and the field laborers; till nothing remained for the freeman to do but to live upon the bounty of the state, or to join the ranks of the clients who attended upon the rich for the pittance of bread and wine which they could thus obtain." (Wolfson, 1902, p.433.) And every year thousands of slaves were liberated while a new batch of captives took their place. In the Aztec Empire a slave owner could be put to death if found guilty of mistreating his slave, as his slave was often the child of another Aztec who had to sell the child so that the rest of the family could survive. But, it is also true that many slaves had no recourse to help when treated brutally by their owners.

Arthur Wolfson makes an astute observation, echoed by Emerson and Frederick Douglas that the institution of slavery in Ancient Greece (Rome, or the United States for that matter) becomes "one of the greatest curses of Greece, for it tended to make all honest labor a disgrace and to feed the fiercer passions of mankind" Idleness becomes the scourge on that class of people who are liberated from manual labor, due to the importation of slaves or extremely cheap labor. In Rome this idle class demanded two things from the state: "plenty to eat and frequent opportunity to enjoy themselves" which included theatrical shows, gladiatorial contests, and chariot races. "Ease, irresponsibility, and luxury tended to deprave the social and moral tone of the capitol" (Wolfson, 1902, 434). A similar state of idleness with the concomitant emergence of ignoble passions would surface in America's southern states who sanctioned and fiercely defended slavery.

Grievances Justifying Separation

In America, in the years before her independence from Britain, a number of the colonies had come together in both the First Continental Congress and in the Second Continental Congress to redress grievances against King George III of England. Among the accusations leveled against the King were taxation without representation, the dissolution of legislative bodies not in support of the King's positions; placing the people in danger from invasion by other countries and subjecting them to arguments and quarrels amongst themselves because he had not elected other legislative bodies to replace the ones he dissolved. He was accused of buying off the judges, and he had forced the people to house and feed standing armies in times of peace, which placed an undue burden on the populace. Moreover the colonists were being denied a trial by a jury of their peers, and he had imposed an arbitrary government in some areas rather than the "free System of English Law." "He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the Lives or our People." (The Nation's Experience, 852)

These claims made by the colonists in their minds justified the necessity of breaking ties with England, which they proceeded to do. Though not all colonists wanted to cede from Great Britain, those in control of their colonial governments, over time, persuaded enough people that this was a necessary step, as their rights as Englishmen were not being honored nor recognized. The point most frequently stressed in history classes today as to why the colonists were most upset seems to be that of taxation without representation. But if one looks more closely at this issue, one can find evidence to strongly suggest that the colonists did not want representation in Parliament for a number of reasons. Besides, they felt it was becoming more and more clear that England, by treating the colonists different from other English subjects residing in Britain, did indeed see them as different. The Englishmen of the colonies were no longer equal to Englishmen in England in the eyes of the British.

Upon realizing their mutual grievances against England, the thirteen colonies formed a federation and eventually came together to defeat England in the

American Revolution. Having come together to fight against England, the colonists did realize that they needed to stay connected in some manner for mutual protection from other nations who might have designs on filling the "vacuum" left by England. During the war with England representatives from the colonies attended the First and Second Continental Congresses where grievances were aired, solutions were discussed, and documents were drawn up delineating these concerns as well as outlining economic, philosophical and political outlooks held in common by many of the attendees. Many of these documents were to form the backbone of the political philosophy of the new nation.

Potential for Abuse of Power

But a major obstacle was before them. Before the War of Independence the thirteen colonies existed as rather autonomous settlements. Though many borrowed their form of government from England, there were differences among them due to the culture and the religion of their earliest settlers. Even so, one of the primary characteristics of the New Englanders was a suspicion of and dislike for monarchy and aristocracy such as was operating in England. Many of the lawyers who would go on to establish the laws governing the new nation were well-read in world history. They understood the potential for abuse of the people by government and the clergy. Therefore, the delineation of power and the separation of church and state would occupy a place of preeminence in the assemblies. Some wanted a strong, centralized government or national legislature, while others wanted to keep the power centered in the individual states. Each proponent had legitimate concerns, yet many also saw the opportunity to enhance their own wealth and power. Eventually these two opposing convictions would play out in the larger arena of state rights versus federal rights and authority. But beside the question of where ultimate authority would lie, other vexing problems needed a visitation: How will representation be determined? What will be the criteria for political participation in the new nation? What constitutes property and how will it be protected? Who will settle disputes between the states and the new national government?

Initially, the most pressing of the issues was that of nation-state relations. Which will have the ultimate power to decide, the national congress or the representatives from individual states, when at an impasse on a particular problem? Where do states' rights end and the national legislature's begin? What constitutes an illegal infringement by the national or federal government upon state sovereignty? What precisely does the Constitution protect when it comes to certain questions of commerce, property, and business arrangements? Questions such as these would take time to resolve, and they did. How to divide power between the national government and the states was the primary concern. Soon a third factor, the people, was introduced into the equation in an oblique way, which the Framers of the Constitution had to address. The framers took for granted that the Constitution was a contract, but between whom? Was it a contract between the people and the federal government? Or was it a contract between the states and the federal

government? "Some commentators argue that it specified the relationship between the people and the national government and that the former empower the latter. ... Others suggest that the contract is between the states and the nation" (Epstein, 2000, 184.). If one believed in the latter case, then the states would have the right to cancel the contract — dissolve the political bands? — if they felt their needs were not being met since it is they who created the national government. And in time the southern states who wanted to secede from the Union, over the issue of slavery, would come back to this debate as evidence for their right to leave. The rationale could be this: As a partner in a contract, which was no longer fulfilling their needs, the state would be practicing its right to absolve itself from further association with a defunct partner. Ultimately, a civil war would be required to settle this confusion over who the contract was between.

In any case an irony existed. Each group would be able to cite the Constitution as the document establishing the legitimacy of their point of view. For example, those who believed that the national government must be attuned to the wishes of the people cited the preamble: "We the people of the United States... do ordain and establish this Constitution..." as the basis for their belief. The adherents of this view were known as cooperative federalists. On the other hand, those who believed that the states had created the national government felt that the government was beholden to states' wishes, and they "turned to the language in Article VII, that the ratification of nine states shall be sufficient for the Establishment of this Constitution between the states so ratifying'" (Epstein, 2000 185.). Adherents to this interpretation were known as dual federalists. To reiterate, a major concern for many was the potential for abuse of power by the newly created federal government, hence the extreme concern for how power was to be divided. A solution was at hand as far as reducing the potential for abuse of power by the federal government. "To keep government from seizing more power than it was assigned, James Madison proposed to divide it into different branches that would check and balance one another: a two-house legislature, and independent executive, and an independent judiciary" (The National Experience, 1968, 134).

Representation and Taxation in the New Nation

Another concern on behalf of the states had to do with taxation and representation. It was agreed that the upper house (the Senate) would have an equal number of representatives from each state, while representation in the lower house (the House of Representatives) would be based on the state's population. Moreover, direct taxation would also be based on the state's population. And herein lay the dilemma. The southern states did not have near the numbers of white, land-owning males as did the north, and would therefore be at a disadvantage when it came to voting on any number of issues. In addition, the southern states would be taxed relatively more if their population of blacks were counted in the same way as the whites. Therefore, a compromise was struck in order to increase the chance that the southern states would adopt the Constitution. Every five slaves were considered equal to three free men. Hence, the stipulation in Article I of the Constitution that

each black person was to be considered three-fifths of a person for purposes of representation. (Later the Fourteenth Amendment corrected this decree so that every black person was considered a full person).

Obviously, one slave was not considered equal to one white person in the eyes of the law. And the Indian was not even considered a person as he could not be taxed. (Native Americans do not gain citizenship until 1954!) The apparent irony here is that at the same time the colonists were decrying their mistreatment and economic enslavement to Britain, they were engaged in the business of human bondage themselves. It must have crossed the minds of many just how insincere and morally hollow their words sounded in the ears of Europeans. How could the ideas of liberty, equality and self-government... "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" ... be only for the few?

As for being treated fairly, the black people — along with the Native American, Mexicans and other minorities — were to face a long history of racism, terrorism, bigotry and discrimination. Many countries openly discriminated against others deemed to be different. It was not considered unusual, unjust, or immoral in many peoples' minds. And the early Americans, for the most part, were no different from many others in holding to racial discrimination and separation. To better understand how entire groups of people were excluded from the promises of a new and better form of government, one needs to be familiar with both the economics of the time and with the social stratification of society at that time.

Economics and Social Stratification

Both in the North and in the South settlers initially were farmers and craftsmen. But over time the North became more industrial while the South continued an agricultural way of life. Strife existed between the North and the South over a number of issues, and some of the disagreements eventually became explosive thereby leading to the Civil War. Two of the most contentious issues were: (1) the role and power of the new central government (which evolved from the two Continental Congresses), and (2) the issue of slavery. (The conflict and concerns between state versus federal supremacy was briefly addressed above). As for slavery, the first Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619. According to the editors of *The National Experience*, "There is some evidence that they were at first treated like other servants and freed after a term of years." This practice was known as indentured servitude. It was a common form of economics in Europe. It was often the case that propertyless people were lent a piece of land by the landowner for cultivation. They would grow food for their own consumption, and a bit extra for either direct sale or as payment to the landowner. Land was owned by a small number of very wealthy people. And in order to survive one had to, in essence, work for them either directly or indirectly. In theory, after so many years an indentured servant worked off his or her servitude and was a free person. But perpetual slavery was not the focus of this institution, at least not in theory. So, how did this "peculiar institution" come to be?

As mentioned above, the idea that those caught in battle became the captives of the victors and, in essence, their slaves has an extremely long history. Toward the end of the 1600's more and more Africans who were the losers in battles with other African tribes, in Africa, were brought to the west coast of that continent by their victors and were sold to slavetraders, or traded for European goods. This is not to say that no Europeans were involved in foraging into the interior of Africa for slaves. But it must be said and known that Africans were heavily involved in this enterprise. In particular, the Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, English, and the British colonists were heavily involved in sponsoring this practice on the west coast of Africa during this time. And as more captives were caught and sold or traded, more and more slaves ended up on plantations in America and the West Indies. As the number of Africans in America increased, laws were passed differentiating them from white indentured servants. They would no longer be considered indentured servants in the eyes of the British-Americans, nor would they be protected by the law. They were now considered slaves whose children and grandchildren would be born into perpetual bondage.

The three states with the largest plantations were Maryland, South Carolina and Virginia, and more than half the population of these states were enslaved by the middle of the 1700's. As white indentured servants gained their freedom by paying off their passage to the New World, many became small landowners themselves, or craftsmen working for themselves. This put pressure on the large planters to continually find more laborers. Who was going to cultivate the large fields of tobacco, cotton and sugar? Slavery was the perfect solution. The large plantation owner did not have to pay any wages, nor abide by any laws in terms of how he treated his slaves, nor would they ever be able to leave. They were viewed strictly as property according to the law, and property was protected in the Constitution. If slaves attempted to run away, there were legal acts supporting the recovery of them in any way deemed necessary. And the slaveowner could punish or even kill his slaves with little to fear from the government. It was a vicious cycle, and cruelty was essential to it. Just how important were these labor-intensive crops to the overall economy? By 1815 cotton was king in the South. "It accounted for more than half the country's exports and thus paid for most of its imports" (The National Experience 209). The institution of slavery was so important to the economy and the way of life of the southern American, that it took a civil war to put an end to it.

Alleged Racial Differences Justifies Bondage

Racism and bigotry might be considered more contemporary terms. Yet, the emotions and behaviors these two terms can evoke were certainly known. Keep in mind the current debate as to the potential inappropriateness of subjecting or interpreting the actions and ideas of people in the past to values held today as values change. Having said this, what rationale was used to sanction the unjust, unequal treatment of one group by another — specifically the subjugation of the Africans by the Americans? How did the defenders of the founding documents of the United States explain this "peculiar institution" to themselves and to the rest of

the world?

Besides depending on slavery for economic prosperity, there were many who felt that the African was truly an inferior type of human. Some maintained that the African was more closely related to the great apes than to humans. Therefore, the two races of humans were not equal and never would be. A Georgia doctor claimed that the Negro's brain was more animal-like — operating from instinct, rather than from intellect. The Negro is oblivious to thoughts of the future, and is more content to enjoy "mere animal pleasures of the present moment." Thoughts such as these affirmed the use of cruelty and arbitrary power to "restrain the excesses of the Negro's animal nature." These notions also established the master-slave relationship as a natural condition. They justified the conclusion that those truths affirmed in the Declaration of Independence, those rights guaranteed in state constitutions, and the benefits of citizenship were not intended to apply to blacks.

Southern Anger and Bitterness Increases

But it was also cotton that gave the North its most profitable trade! Raw cotton was sent north to the textile mills for processing, weaving into fabric, sewing into garments and then exported to Europe. This became a point of contention between the two regions as the "real money" was made by processing, weaving, and exporting the cotton. In addition, most of the improved transportation system was owned by Northerners who charged exorbitant prices for moving the raw cotton from the plantations in the South to the factories in the North. Another factor affecting the growing animosity between the North and the South was the banking industry centered in the North. In 1819 there was a down-turn in the business cycle of the commercial-industrial economy brought on by two events: overly zealous land and business speculation and a decrease in demand by Europe for American cotton. The South felt that they were experiencing most of the economic distress from these two events and were angry. This anger soon surfaced in national politics.

The tensions between the South and the North were reaching a critical point. As mentioned previously cotton was playing less of a role in the overall economy of the nation as industry took its place in prominence. Though ideas for starting manufacturing jobs, planning steamship lines, and building railroads to divert Western trade to the Southern cities were discussed, the goal of competing against Northern interests never materialized in any significant way. Eventually the people of the South developed a mindset that only increased the animosity and bitterness they felt towards the North. In fact, many Southerners believed a conspiracy was afoot by Northern bankers, merchants and manufacturers too reduce them to a colonial status. In reality, the South had not prepared itself for the Industrial Revolution. Nor had it invested in education, infrastructure or the development of any other economy than that of farming. So when the territories of the West were opening up to settlement, the Southerners wanted the freedom to take their slaves with them.

Slavery Becomes a Moral Question

Going back to the first part of the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal..." Pauline Maier states that one of the rationalizations for the current situation of inequality was based on an idea of John Locke's: in essence, men were equal at some time in the distant past before the establishment of governments, but are not now so. This could be how the founders got around the morally sticky point of inequality. Another concept that seems twisted, yet could in some bizarre way justify the institution of slavery was this: "equality meant simply that no one held authority over others by right of birth or as a gift from God" (Maier, 1997,136.). But they could hold authority over others by right of conquest or by right of purchase? A third way to interpret this notion of equality is to realize that this concept concerned some theoretical equality "between rich and poor white men, or those who lived in different geographical sections..." (Maier, 192). The reality was that white men were considered intellectually and morally superior to blacks, Indians, and women. And this was upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States. And it would not be seriously challenged in national politics until Abraham Lincoln campaigned against Stephen Douglas for the presidency in 1858.

In the 1820's various reform movements were actively promoting the belief that "In America's congenial environment man would reveal his capacity to govern himself, to live in harmony with the laws of God's universe, and to eradicate social injustice; he would build an ideal society led by righteous men motivated by disinterested benevolence" (Nat. Exp., 251). This country would serve as a model for the rest of the world. But a significant cancer remained on the face of this model, and that was slavery. Reformers were intensely conscience of the hypocrisy in promoting America as this exemplar of liberalism, progress, and moral uprightness while remaining one of the last bastions of human bondage in the Western world. And the Abolitionists would come to dominate the reform movement and gain overwhelming Northern support for their cause — the elimination of slavery as a legally recognized and protected institution. Lest anyone think that discrimination and race prejudice was absent in the North, Northern free Negroes were excluded from, "most trades and professions and forced into menial occupations; they were barred from the public schools or sent to segregated schools; they were assigned segregated seats in white churches and on public transportation; they were denied the ballot except in five New England states and New York (where they had to meet property qualifications not required of whites); and they were prohibited from settling in several Western states" (Nat.Exp 266-267). What motivated the Northerners to support the abolitionists' belief that slavery was a moral wrong, yet enabled them to maintain both race prejudice and discrimination, and the opinion that slavery should only be confined to its present limits? The Northerners, specifically free white farmers, coveted the lands that slaveholders also wanted. If the slaveholders were prohibited from taking their slaves with them to cultivate the new land, they would stay put.

The debate over the expansion of slavery into the newly opened territories finally brought to the forefront of this debate the moral aspect of this "peculiar institution." Two key players in this new focus were Stephen A. Douglas, an Illinois Democrat, and Abraham Lincoln, an Illinois Republican. In 1847 Douglas was the Chairman of the Committee on Territories, who was for the rapid settlement of the West and for the preservation of the Union. With respect to the issue of expansion of slavery into the West (the territorial problem), he advocated the doctrine of "popular sovereignty," which called for the people who actually settled in a territory to decide for themselves whether to permit slavery or not. Douglas believed this third way was both democratic and practical. In addition, it would allow one to remain ambiguous as to the moral question of slavery, which the abolitionists continued to raise. A question was put to him by Lincoln in the Freeport, Illinois, debate, "Was there any lawful way in which the inhabitants of a territory could keep slavery from their midst?" (Nat. 328) Douglas responded that they could refuse to adopt a strict slave code. Without the strict enforcement of a slave code, wherein others were required to help return runaway slaves, many slaveowners would be reluctant to bring their valuable property into a territory. This was his way through the problem that just wouldn't go away.

Lincoln, on the other hand, was a free-soiler and considered slavery a moral, social and political wrong. He felt that a nation dedicated to liberty and the unalienable rights of man could not long continue to practice (the South), nor tolerate (the North), human bondage. He believed it would die a natural death over time. As a senator from Illinois, he was aware of the escalating battle between antislavery Northerners and proslavery Southerners who were in a race to settle the Kansas territory. The important point here is that Kansas was operating under Douglas' "popular sovereignty" doctrine. Until it became a state, the settlers could decide for themselves if the Kansas territory would permit slavery or not. But the violence in the Kansas territory was getting out of hand, even spilling onto the floor of Congress where Congressman Preston Brooks from South Carolina canded Senator Charles Sumner from Massachusetts. Lincoln made his stance on the question of the expansion of slavery a key difference between him and Douglas in the debates for the presidential election of 1858.

Initially, Lincoln was not so concerned with the institution of slavery as he was with the preservation of the Union. Eleven southern states were threatening to secede from the Union as their right to practice slavery and maintain their way of life was in imminent danger. Some historians suggest that the South's true motive for the expansion of slavery was due to their fear that the nation was moving closer to the idea that it was wrong to maintain slavery anywhere. Though slavery was a cancer threatening to spread to the new territories opening to the west, Lincoln was concerned about the constitutionality of abolishing slavery. He recognized that slaves were deemed property, and therefore the slaveowner was protected by law from having his property confiscated by the federal government or any other organization. Rightly, he feared that forcing abolition on the South would lead to

violence and the possibility of a war. But he saw no out as he felt that slavery would undermine the foundation of democracy.

Lincoln Identifies Slavery as the National Sin

As a lawyer he had studied the words and ideas of the founding fathers, and came to the conclusion that the cornerstone of American democracy was the Declaration of Independence with its claim that "all men are created equal" and that all men are "endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, ...Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" which the institution of slavery did not support. "He felt that the Declaration of Independence expressed the highest political truths in history, and that blacks and whites were entitled to the rights it spelled out" (Freedman, 1987 52). Without initially intending to, Lincoln became the leading spokesman on antislavery on the national level. No doubt his remarkable way with word, and his ability to reach the human psyche on multiple levels had something to do with his ascendancy to this position.

Abraham Lincoln came into the presidency on March 4, 1861. Since his election four months earlier seven Southern states had left the Union. Others were threatening to do the same as they could not accept this "Black Republican" as president. The powder keg was the issue of slavery. South Carolina's governor demanded that Fort Sumter, at the entrance to the Charleston Harbor, be given up to them as they were now a sovereign nation. On April 6, 1861, Lincoln notified the South Carolina governor that a "supply fleet" was on its way to Charleston. On April 12, 1861, cannons ringing the harbor fired on the fleet and the American Civil War had begun. During the war the presidential election came up again. Lincoln did not know if he could win it since the North had few successes in the early campaigns of the war. But by election day, in November of 1864, the end of the war was in sight. Still, Lincoln put intense pressure on Congress to pass his Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, a wartime measure which could be overturned by the courts, making it a constitutional amendment. Congress was reluctant to do so, but on January 31, 1865, the House of Representatives approved the Thirteenth Amendment prohibiting slavery in the United States. A month later on March 4, Lincoln was sworn in for a second term as President of the United States.

In Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, read on March 4, 1865, he placed equal responsibility for the war on the South for their desire to "make war rather than let the nation survive," and on the North for their willingness to "accept war rather than let it perish." He also spells out that both sides are responsible for the national sin of slavery. One side, the South, engaged in it, while the other side, the North, allowed it by providing for its protection in the Constitution. He goes on to note that both sides read the same Bible, thereby prayed to the same God, and asked for His help in destroying the other. What strangeness man engages in. "But let us judge not that we be not judged," said Lincoln, quoting the gospel of Matthew.

Though he had officially eliminated slavery from the United States by having the

Emancipation Proclamation become the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, Lincoln understood that it would take years of continued suffering and hardship on the part of blacks and whites before its spiritual and emotional effects would be wiped from our hearts. In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln calls us to the task which remains — "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work... to the great task remaining...that we take increased devotion to that cause [the prohibition of slavery]... that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." And it did take further suffering on the part of the blacks... for another 100 years... before they would gain the rights and benefits of citizenship as Americans.

But the struggle and suffering is not over. Some Americans continue to experience unequal treatment under the law and are still discriminated against by economic institutions and are still denied equal opportunities. Yet, there is hope that because we do have the system of government that allows for continued interpretation of our founding documents and because we do have recourse to passing constitutional amendments, we can change those things we no longer agree are in the best interest of the people. It can be as Lincoln proclaimed "... a government of the people, by the people, for the people..." if we as citizens take our duties and responsibilities seriously and participate in our government.

Pertinent Supreme Court Cases:

Prigg vs Pennsylvania (1842)

Scott vs Sanford (1857)

United States vs Cruikshank (1876)

Civil Rights Cases (1883) — declares Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional

Plessy vs Ferguson (1896)

William vs Mississippi (1898)

Brown vs Board of Education (1954)

Some Important Historical Figures With Regards to Equality:

Abraham Lincoln

Frederick Douglass

Senator Charles Sumner

Ralph Waldo Emerson

William Lloyd Garrison

William Ellery Channing

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Henry Thoreau

Chief Joseph

Martin Luther King, Jr.

John F. Kennedy

Implementation

Benchmarks and Standards Addressed in this Unit:

Connections:

- * Relate language arts to other curricular areas
- * Analyze the impact of language
- * Examine the role of language

Listening:

- * Listen to text by authors of diverse backgrounds

Speaking:

- * Summarize events and information
- * Demonstrate strategies for clarifying meaning- discussing questions that arise.
- * Use various formats: oral reports, panel discussions, and creative speaking activities

Reading:

- * Summarize, generalize and draw conclusions
- * Make judgments and evaluate what is read
- * Recognize and interpret similes, metaphors, and idioms
- * Analyze content and structure of reading passages including literary techniques: irony, satire, and symbolism

Writing:

- * Write in a variety of forms: paragraphs, diaries, letters, poems, essays and dialogue

Student Lesson Plans:

1. Have students read a personal letter written by a historical figure to his friend or close acquaintance. Then have the student play the role of this friend and write a letter back expressing his or her own sentiments on the content of the letter.
2. Have the students read in the newspaper a recently written letter to either Dear Abby or Ann Landers. Have them read her response back to the writer. Then have the students play the part of a historical person, obviously, after having read a variety of letters, diary entries and correspondences by historical persons, who writes a letter to one of these two women asking for advice. Next have students exchange letters with one another and play the part of Dear Abby and give that person some advice on how to handle the problem.
3. After reading an account about a day in the life of a slave, or of an indentured servant, have students write any type of poem (diamante, haiku, repeated line poem, acrostic, etc.) in which they reflect on their thoughts about what they have just learned.
4. Have students read Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and Chief Joseph's selected statements and speeches. Then have students write a compare and contrast paragraph analyzing their similarities.

Bibliography

Teacher Reading List

Barber, Benjamin R.. *Jihad vs. Mc World: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995.

--- *A Place for Us: How to Make Society Civil and Democracy Strong*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1998.

Batstone, D. and Medieta, editors. *The Good Citizen*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Epstein, L. and Walker T.. *Constitutional Law For A Changing America: A Short Course*. Washington D.C.: A Division of Congressional Quarterly, 2000.

Freedman, Russell. *Lincoln: A Photobiography*. New York: Ticknor & Fields: A Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Gallagher, A. and L. Singleton *Education for Freedom: Lessons on the First Amendment for Students (K-12)*. Denver: University of Denver, 1995.

Johnson, Hays & Hays. *Engaging the Public: How Government and the Media Can Reinvigorate American Democracy*. New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998.

Maier, Pauline. *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

McClain, P. and J. Stewart Jr.. *"Can We All Get Along?": Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics*. Colorado: Westview Press, 1999.

Student Reading List

Burciaga, Leon, Reveles, et al. *Cada Cabeza Es Un Mundo*. Sausalito: Hispanic Education and Media Group, Inc., 1996.

Selected articles on human oppression and responses to human oppression.

Carnes, Jim. *Us and Them: A History of Intolerance in America*. Montgomery Alabama: Teaching Tolerance, Southern Poverty Law Center, 1995. This is a collection of stories profiling cases of religious and racial discrimination in the United States from the late 1600's to the present.

The Declaration of Independence

The Constitution

Speeches and Poems:

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream"

Chief Joseph: "I will fight no more forever," and his "Selected Statements and Speeches"

Frederick Douglas's, "An Appeal to Congress for Impartial Suffrage"

Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem, "Voluntaries"

Possible Novels:

The War Between the Classes, Something Upstairs, Slave Dancer, The Blazing Hills, My Brother Sam is Dead, Jump Ship to Freedom, Red Badge of Courage, A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl's Journal, 1830-1832, Caddie Woodlawn, Rifles for Watie, This Strange New Feeling, Sarah Bishop, etc.