

The Implications of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation on the Education of Enslaved People in America

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Abstract

This paper discusses how Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had an extraordinary impact on the development of education for enslaved people, particularly African Americans, after the Civil War. It also highlights how the long-standing practice of slavery in America, which had persisted for centuries, was boldly challenged by Lincoln's declaration to abolish it. Lincoln issued a policy to eliminate slavery, which significantly influenced their level of education in the years that followed. This paper used a qualitative method with a historical approach to explain the social aspects of life in the past. The research findings indicate that during the era of slavery, enslaved individuals were heavily bound by various rules imposed by plantation owners. These rules had to be obeyed without any means of self-defense. Enslaved people were considered property of landowners, who could sell them and treat them as they pleased. Abraham Lincoln sought to abolish this practice by issuing a presidential decree in the form of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. This effort culminated in the U.S. Congress adding the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865. The policy to abolish slavery gave rise to human rights protections for enslaved individuals, especially those working in the southern states.

Keywords: Abraham Lincoln, Slavery, human rights, historical approach.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the United States during the early arrival of European migrants was heavily influenced by the religious background, (Altabaa & Hamawiya, 2019) culture, and practical needs of the new settlers. In the 17th century, the colonies established by European migrants, such as the English, Dutch, and Spanish, developed diverse educational systems depending on the region and the goals of colonization. In New England, for example, particularly in colonies like Massachusetts, education was strongly influenced by the Puritans, a Protestant religious group. The Puritans emphasized the importance of literacy to read the Bible (Umar, 2020), which is why education here was more formal and organized, with the establishment of primary schools known as "common schools." In 1636, Harvard University was founded to train ministers. (Elliott & Rossiter, 1992) In the southern colonies, such as Virginia and Carolina, education was more informal and often only available to children from wealthy families. Education took place at home or through private tutors. Unlike New England, the focus of education here was more on practical skills, such as farming and trade.

(Merchant, 2010) Meanwhile, the middle colonies, such as Pennsylvania and New York, were more diverse in terms of ethnicity and religion, which influenced their approach to education. Many migrants from Germany and the Netherlands brought their own educational traditions. In this region, schools were often secular, though some were also religious-based.

Access to education was restricted to specific people, despite its perceived importance. Children from lower socioeconomic strata and girls frequently lacked access to formal schooling. While children from low-income households received just the practical skills necessary for daily tasks, girls were typically only taught domestic skills. In the meantime, minority groups like Native Americans and Black people, particularly those who were slaves, had virtually no access to education. Assimilation into colonial society was the goal of Native American education initiatives, but enslaved Black people were typically prohibited from learning to read and write (Cunningham, 2023). Before Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation

Proclamation in January, Black people had limited access to schooling.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research approach is used in this study, which emphasizes a better comprehension of a problem by looking at it case-by-case. According to Zakariah (Zakariah, Afriani, & Zakariah, 2020), qualitative research is a scientific inquiry that emphasizes a thorough communication process between the researcher and the phenomenon being examined in order to comprehend it in its natural social context. Additionally, according to Saryono (Saryono, 2010), qualitative research is used to explore, identify, characterize, and explain the attributes or distinctive features of social impacts that cannot be quantified, explained, or defined using a quantitative approach. Hossein Nassaji (Nassaji, 2015) stated that qualitative research is a process that generates descriptive data in the form of written words.

On the other hand, the goal of qualitative methods, according to Katharine Orellana M. et.al, is to provide a comprehensive and interpreted picture of the social world of research participants by learning about their experiences, viewpoints, histories, and material and social situations. (Orellana, Manthorpe, & Moriarty, 2015)

The approach used in analyzing the above problem is a historical approach aimed at collecting data and explaining aspects of social life that occurred in the past. (Priyono. Drs., 2016). According to Nugroho Notosusanto, as quoted by Mochamad Afroni (Afroni, 2019), among the four dominant functions of history, namely: Recreational Function, Inspirational Function, Instructive Function, and Educational Function, this paper emphasizes two functions, namely the inspirational function, which is a process to strengthen identity and enhance dedication as a nation. By appreciating various events and tales of heroism, and paying attention to the great works of prominent figures, it will instill pride and profound meaning for the younger generation. Therefore, by studying history, we

will be able to develop the inspiration, imagination, and creativity of the current generation in order to living as a nation and a state. The function of inspiration can also be linked to history as moral education. And the second is the educational function, that history can be made a lesson in the daily lives of every human being. History also teaches about examples that have occurred so that a person becomes wise, serving as a guide in behavior. Through this historical approach, one is invited to enter the actual state concerning the application of an event.

To obtain comprehensive research, data is required. In this study, data is obtained from library materials or documentation data that are directly or indirectly related to the object. Subsequently, the data will be processed and analyzed to draw conclusions and proof.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Education of Slaves Before the Emancipation Proclamation

Before the Emancipation Proclamation (Guelzo, 2004) issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, the state of education in the United States was very diverse and tended to be uneven. There are several key factors that influenced education during this period, including economic, social, and political conditions, which varied greatly between the Northern and Southern states. Education for slaves remained very limited and often prohibited. During this period, slavery continued to thrive in the Southern states, while there were some changes in the North regarding education and the abolition of slavery. (Bruns, 2018)

The educational conditions for slaves during this period can be seen that in most American colonies, particularly in the Southern regions, slave owners and colonial governments were strongly opposed to the idea of providing education to enslaved individuals. They were concerned that the ability to read and write would provide opportunities for the slaves to communicate effectively and even possibly organize

rebellions or escape. (Williams, 2009) Therefore, literacy education for slaves was often legally prohibited or banned by social norms. In addition, in many colonies, especially in the South, there were laws that explicitly prohibited slaves from learning to read and write (Campo, 2015). For example, in the mid-18th century, South Carolina and Georgia had laws prohibiting slave owners or other individuals from teaching slaves to read or write.

Although slaves were officially prohibited from learning to read and write, some slaves acquired education in the form of practical skills through oral instruction. They might learn skills such as farming, sewing, or handicrafts from their owners or from fellow slaves. However, this was not formal education and did not include literacy skills. There are several religious groups, such as the Quakers, who tried to provide basic education to enslaved people (Wanda, McClinton, & et.al., 2023). Some pastors and missionaries made efforts to teach religion to slaves, especially in the form of Bible teaching. (Freedman, 2018) However, these efforts were often limited, and the teaching was often conducted without teaching reading or writing.

In the Northern colonies, where slavery was less dominant compared to the South, there were more opportunities for enslaved or free black people to receive an education. For example, in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, there were groups that sought to provide education to black communities. However, even in the Northern colonies, access to education remained very limited for enslaved black people.

In the Southern colonies, which had a plantation economy heavily reliant on slave labor, education for slaves was almost nonexistent. One of the main reasons why education was prohibited for slaves was the fear that they would use that knowledge to organize uprisings. One famous example is Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, where an educated slave led an armed uprising. (Afrizal & Setiawan, 2020) Although this rebellion

occurred after American independence, the event reflects long-standing concerns among slave owners about the potential for rebellion from educated slaves.

Overall, education for slaves before the proclamation of emancipation was very rare and restricted by laws and social norms. Access to formal education was almost nonexistent, especially in the Southern colonies, where the system of slavery was more stringent. Although there were some individual or religious community efforts to provide education to slaves, they often faced significant legal and social barriers. Fear of rebellion and strict social control made education for slaves something that was prohibited and heavily guarded.

The issued of Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.

The Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, is one of the most important documents in American history. This proclamation marked a turning point in the American Civil War (1861- 1865) and became a significant step towards the abolition of slavery in the United States. Initially, the Civil War did not begin with the primary goal of abolishing slavery, but rather to preserve the unity of the United States. (Putri & et.el., 2024) The Southern states that seceded (the Confederacy) wanted to protect their right to maintain slavery, while the Northern states (the Union) primarily fought to prevent the secession of the country.

As the war progressed, Lincoln and many leaders in the North realized that the abolition of slavery could weaken the economic and social power of the Southern states. Slavery was a main pillar of the plantation economy in the South, and ending slavery would undermine their labor base. Lincoln hoped that with the end of slavery, the Confederate states and the Union states could be easily reunited, but Lincoln found no other way except by issuing a statement known as the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. The proclamation read, in its main part: (Schwartz, 2015)

That on the 1st of January, in the year of our Lord 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons.

In the emancipation proclamation, it is stated: all slaves in the states that are at war with the Union (the Confederate states) will be "forever free" starting January 1, 1863. This includes states such as Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, which were attempting to secede from the United States. However, in practice, the Emancipation Proclamation did not immediately free all slaves in the United States. The Proclamation only applied to the Confederate states that were in rebellion and did not include the border states such as Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware, which still had slavery but remained loyal to the Union.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not immediately free slaves in the Southern states because those areas were still under Confederate control, at least the proclamation gave hope and courage to many slaves to escape and seek refuge in Union-controlled territories. Many escaping slaves joined the Union Army after the proclamation, with tens of thousands of black people becoming soldiers and helping to fight against the Confederacy. The Emancipation Proclamation did not immediately end slavery throughout the United States; it was a significant first step towards the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which was eventually ratified in 1865 and officially abolished slavery across the nation. (Guelzo, Great Emancipator was Radical of his Day: Lincoln Opposed Economic Injustice, 2016)

This amendment states that slavery or involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime, is prohibited throughout the United States. This document also became an

important symbol in the history of the civil rights struggle in the United States. Although it did not directly grant full rights to black people, this proclamation helped initiate the long journey towards equality and freedom. On the other hand, Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was one of the key moments in American history that changed the course of the Civil War from merely a struggle to preserve the unity of the nation to a struggle to abolish slavery. Although it has its limitations, its moral, political, and military impact was immense, and this proclamation became a symbol of freedom and equality for future generations.

Education of Slaves after the Emancipation Proclamation.

The Emancipation Proclamation issued by Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, had a significant impact on the status of slavery in the United States, including its influence on education for the enslaved. Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not directly free all slaves, as it only applied to the Confederate states that were in rebellion, it became an important turning point that gradually opened access to education for those who had previously been enslaved.

One of the greatest impacts of the Emancipation Proclamation was the psychological and social freedom given to slaves to begin learning literacy skills. (Roediger, 2014) Many freed individuals showed an extraordinary enthusiasm for learning. Although the educational conditions for Black people were still far from ideal, the enthusiasm for obtaining an education became a significant motivation for Black people in the post-war era. (Dalton, 1991)

After the Emancipation Proclamation was announced, many slaves escaped from Confederate territories and sought refuge in Union-controlled areas. In these regions, freed slaves had their first opportunity to access formal education. Although significant challenges remained, the Emancipation Proclamation provided hope and a first step for many enslaved people to learn to read and write, which had previously been strictly

prohibited in the Southern regions. As the emancipation of slaves spread, various groups and institutions began to strive to provide education to the newly freed slaves. For example, churches and missionary organizations began establishing schools for the freed people, especially in the Southern regions after the Union successfully took control of those areas. After emancipation, freed Black people often took it upon themselves to establish schools. They established schools in churches, homes, or community buildings, with many formerly enslaved individuals serving as teachers for their communities. (Hager, 2012)

Although the Emancipation Proclamation paved the way for the education of newly freed slaves, many obstacles remained. Black people in the South still faced widespread discrimination, including physical attacks and intimidation from white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan. Schools for Black individuals were often targets of violence, and many Black communities faced significant challenges in protecting their access to education.

In 1865, after the end of the Civil War, the United States government established the Freedmen's Bureau, a government agency aimed at assisting newly freed individuals in transitioning from slavery to free life. One of the primary tasks of the Freedmen's Bureau was to establish schools for newly freed Black people. (Butchart, 2010)

The Freedmen's Bureau played a crucial role in establishing schools in the South, working in collaboration with various volunteer and religious organizations. These schools provided basic education, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, to former slaves who had previously been denied access to education. Around 1,000 schools were established in the South by the Freedmen's Bureau, accommodating over 100,000 Black students between 1865 and 1870. Despite the significant push to set up schools, many of the institutions founded for Black people lacked adequate facilities and often suffered from underfunding. Teachers in these schools were

frequently undertrained and poorly paid, making education a persistent challenge for Black communities in the South.

In addition to primary and secondary schools, several higher education institutions for Black individuals began to be established after the Emancipation Proclamation. For instance, Howard University in Washington, D.C., was founded in 1867 as one of the first universities dedicated to providing higher education for Black people. Universities like Howard became vital centers for education and intellectual development for those who had previously been enslaved. (Dodson, 2016)

The Emancipation Proclamation reinforced the belief that education was a vital tool for achieving freedom and equality. Newly freed Black individuals and their supporters recognized that education was key to overcoming the economic and political oppression they continued to face after the Civil War.

The educational efforts for Black people initiated after the Emancipation Proclamation also laid a crucial foundation for the civil rights movement that emerged later in the 20th century. The struggle to secure equitable access to education for all citizens, regardless of race, was deeply rooted in the efforts that began in the post-Emancipation era.

CONCLUSION

After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 in the United States, which freed slaves in the rebellious states during the Civil War, education for Black people underwent significant changes, although it remained full of challenges. Here are some key conclusions regarding the education of Black people post-emancipation, among them are:

The establishment of schools for Black people after 1863, especially after the end of the Civil War. Various new educational institutions were established to serve Black people, many public schools and colleges were opened in the Southern regions, which had previously been prohibited or severely restricted.

The Expanding Influence of the Freedmen's Bureau in Supporting Education for Newly Freed Black People, this institution played a crucial role in establishing schools, providing basic education for Black children and adults who had never received an education.

In the field of higher education, institutions like the Tuskegee Institute, founded by Booker T. Washington, provided technical and vocational education to black people, while W.E.B. Du Bois and organizations like the Niagara Movement and NAACP advocated for higher liberal arts education. However, only a few black people were able to access higher education at that time, considering the economic and social barriers.

granting voting rights to Black people through the 15th Amendment (1870).

Although there has been progress in access to education, racial discrimination remains a significant barrier. Many schools for Black people do not receive adequate funding and often have facilities that are far worse compared to schools for white people. In addition, Southern states also implemented a system of school segregation (Jim Crow laws), which treated black schools separately and unequally. Although full of challenges, post-Emancipation education became an important tool for the empowerment of black people. Many saw education as a means to achieve social, economic, and political progress, as well as a tool to overcome the ignorance that had previously been imposed on them during the era of slavery. Overall, education for Black people after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 began to develop, but it was limited by deep-seated inequalities and ongoing structural challenges. However, education was still considered the key to freedom and progress amidst the existing discrimination in the post-war era.

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