

LEADERSHIP

Lincoln and the Art of Transformative Leadership

by [Doris Kearns Goodwin](#)

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Do the times make the leader, or does the leader shape the times? How can a leader infuse people's lives with a sense of purpose and meaning?

These are among the questions that Doris Kearns Goodwin explores in her new book, *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, which examines four singular styles of leadership: transformative, crisis management, turnaround, and visionary. She follows the course of leadership development in the careers of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson, providing case histories that illustrate the skills and strengths that enabled these four men to lead the United States through periods of great upheaval.

The article that follows is excerpted from her case study of Lincoln's pivotal decision to issue and guide to fruition the Emancipation Proclamation—a purpose that required the support of the cabinet, the army, and, ultimately, the American people. Rarely, Goodwin notes, was a leader better suited to the challenge of the fractured historical moment. Struggle had been his birthright; resilience his keystone strength. Possessed of a powerful emotional intelligence, Lincoln was both merciful and merciless, confident and humble, patient and persistent—able to mediate among factions and sustain the spirits of his countrymen. He displayed an extraordinary ability to absorb the conflicting wills of a divided people and reflect back to them an unbending faith in a unified future.

On July 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln convened a special session of his cabinet to reveal—not to debate—his preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. At the outset, Navy Secretary Gideon Welles recalled, Lincoln declared that he fully appreciated that there were “differences in the Cabinet on the slavery question” and welcomed suggestions following the confidential reading. However, he “wished it to be understood that the question was settled in his own mind” and that “the responsibility of the measure was his.” The time for bold action had arrived.

What enabled Lincoln to determine that the time was right for this fundamental transformation in how the war was waged and what the Union was fighting for? And how did he persuade his fractious cabinet, a skeptical army, and his divided countrymen in the North to go along with him?

Certainly, the dire situation of the war and Lincoln's long-held conviction that "the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy" were vital elements. He had always believed, he later said, that "if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." But underlying all was the steadfast force of his emotional intelligence: his empathy, humility, consistency, self-awareness, self-discipline, and generosity of spirit. These qualities proved indispensable to uniting a divided nation and utterly transforming it, and they provide powerful lessons for leaders at every level.

Acknowledge when failed policies demand a change in direction.

In the last week of June 1862, Union General George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac had suffered a crushing defeat in its first major offensive. In a series of brutal battles, General Robert E. Lee's forces had repulsed McClellan's advance up the Virginia Peninsula toward the Confederate capital at Richmond, driving the Union army into retreat, decimating its ranks, and leaving nearly 16,000 dead, captured, or wounded. At one point the capitulation of McClellan's entire force had seemed possible. Northern morale was at its nadir—lower even than in the aftermath of Bull Run. "Things had gone from bad to worse," Lincoln recalled of that summer, "until I felt that we had reached the end of our rope on the plan of operations we had been pursuing; that we had played our last card and must change our tactics."

So the situation stood on July 22, when the president gathered the cabinet to read his proclamation. He enumerated the various congressional acts regarding confiscation of rebel property, repeated his recommendation for compensated emancipation, and reiterated his goal of preserving the Union. And then he read the single sentence that would change the course of history:

As a fit and necessary military measure for effecting this object [preservation of the Union], I, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, do order and declare that on the first day of January in the year of our Lord 1863, all persons held as slaves within any state or states, wherein the constitutional authority of the United States shall not then be practically recognized, submitted to, and maintained, shall then, thenceforward and forever, be free.

The scope of the proclamation was stunning. For the first time, the president yoked the Union and the abolition of slavery in a single transformative moral force. Some 3.5 million blacks in the South, where generations had lived enslaved, were promised freedom. Seventy-eight words in one sentence would supplant legislation on property rights and slavery that had governed policy in the House and the Senate for nearly three-quarters of a century. By postponing for six months the date the proclamation would take effect, however, Lincoln offered the rebellious states a last chance to end the war and return to the Union before permanently forfeiting their slaves.

Anticipate contending viewpoints.

Though Lincoln had signaled before reading the proclamation that his mind was already made up, he welcomed reactions from his cabinet—his “team of rivals”—whether for or against. So clearly did he know each of the members, so thoroughly had he anticipated their responses, that he was prepared to answer whatever objections they might raise. He had deliberately built a team of men who represented the major geographical, political, and ideological factions of the Union. For months he had listened intently as they wrestled among themselves about how best to preserve this Union. At various junctures diverse members had assailed Lincoln as too radical, too conservative, brazenly dictatorial, or dangerously feckless. He had welcomed the wide range of opinions they provided as he turned the subject over in his mind, debating “first the one side and then the other of every question arising” until, through hard mental work, his own position had emerged. His

process of decision making, born of a characteristic ability to entertain a full carousel of vantage points at a single time, seemed to some laborious; but once he had finally determined to act, it was no longer a question of what—only when.



Lincoln and his cabinet with the Emancipation Proclamation; Lithograph by Currier & Ives, 1876

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Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Attorney General Edward Bates—the most radical and the most conservative of Lincoln’s team—were the only two who expressed strong support for the proclamation. That Stanton recommended its “immediate promulgation” was understandable. More intimately aware than any of his colleagues of the condition of the hard-pressed army, he instantly grasped the massive military boost emancipation would confer: Slave labor kept farms and plantations in operation; the toil of slaves liberated

Confederate soldiers to fight. As for the constitutionalist Bates, he unexpectedly and wholeheartedly concurred—albeit with the condition that emancipated slaves be deported someplace in Central America or Africa.

Welles kept silent, later admitting that the proclamation's "magnitude and its uncertain results," its "solemnity and weight," mightily oppressed him. Not only did he worry about "an extreme exercise of War powers," but he feared that "desperation on the part of the slave-owners" would most likely lengthen the war and raise the struggle to new heights of ferocity. Interior Secretary Caleb Smith, a conservative Whig from Indiana, remained silent as well, though he later confided to his assistant secretary that should Lincoln actually issue the proclamation, he would summarily "resign and go home and attack the Administration."

Montgomery Blair, the postmaster general, forcefully opposed the proclamation. As a spokesman for the border states (he had practiced law in Missouri before moving to Maryland), Blair predicted that emancipation would push loyal Union supporters in those states to the secessionists' side. Furthermore, it would cause such an outcry among conservatives throughout the North that Republicans would lose the upcoming fall elections. Lincoln had considered every aspect of Blair's objections but had concluded that the importance of the slavery issue far exceeded party politics. He reminded Blair of his own persistent efforts to seek compromise. He would, however, willingly allow Blair to lodge written objections.

That Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase, the most ardent abolitionist in the cabinet, recoiled from the president's initiative was irksome. "It went beyond anything I have recommended," Chase admitted, but he feared that wholesale emancipation would lead to "massacre on the one hand and support for the insurrection on the other." Far better to deal with the dangerous issue piecemeal, in the incremental fashion General David Hunter had employed earlier that spring when he issued an order freeing the slaves within the territory of his command, which encompassed South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Although Chase and his fellow abolitionists had been sorely tried when Lincoln summarily annulled

Hunter's order, Lincoln had held firm: "No commanding general shall do such a thing, upon my responsibility," he had said. He would not "feel justified" in leaving such a complex issue "to the decision of commanders in the field." A comprehensive policy was precisely what executive leadership entailed.

Secretary of State William Seward had an internationalist perspective and, consequently, transatlantic anxieties. If the proclamation provoked a racial war that interrupted the production of cotton, the ruling classes in England and France, dependent on American cotton to feed their textile mills, might intervene in behalf of the Confederacy. Lincoln had weighed the force of this argument, too, but was convinced that the masses in England and France, who had earlier pressured their governments to abolish slavery, would never be maneuvered into supporting the Confederacy once the Union truly committed itself to emancipation.

Know when to hold back and when to move forward.

Despite the cacophony of ideas and contending voices, Lincoln remained fixed upon his course of action. Before the meeting came to an end, Seward raised the sensitive question of timing. "The depression of the public mind, consequent upon our repeated reversals is so great," Seward argued, that the proclamation might be seen as "our last shriek, on the retreat." Far preferable to wait "until the eagle of victory takes its flight" and then "hang your proclamation around its neck."

"It was an aspect of the case that, in all my thought upon the subject, I had entirely overlooked," Lincoln said afterward. "The result was that I put the draft of the proclamation aside." For two months he bided his time, awaiting word from the battlefield that the "eagle of victory" had taken flight. At last the tide turned with the retreat of Lee's army from Maryland and Pennsylvania. The battle at Antietam, with some 23,000 dead, was the bloodiest single day of combat in American history. Overwhelming carnage left both sides in a paralytic stupor. This nightmare was not the resounding victory Lincoln had hoped and

prayed for, but it proved sufficient to set his plan in motion. No sooner had the news of Antietam reached him than he revised the preliminary draft of the proclamation. Only five days after the “victory,” on Monday, September 22, he once again convened the cabinet.



Lincoln with General George B. McClellan (fifth from the left) at Antietam, October 3, 1862

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The moment had come for taking the action he had postponed in July. “I wish it were a better time,” he said, abruptly launching into the grave matter of emancipation. “I wish that we were in a better condition.” However, he divulged, as witnessed by Chase and recorded in his diary, “I made the promise to myself and (hesitating a little) to my Maker” that if Lee’s army were “driven out” of Maryland, the proclamation would be issued. The decision was “fixed and unalterable,” Lincoln declared. “The act and all its responsibilities were his

alone.” He had “pondered over it for weeks, and been more confirmed in the rectitude of the measure as time passed on.” That clearly established, Lincoln read his slightly amended version of the proclamation.

If the members of this most unusual team—a microcosm of the disparate factions within the Union itself—were unable to coalesce at this critical juncture, there would be small chance of binding the country at large.

Set an example.

How was it possible to coordinate these inordinately prideful, ambitious, quarrelsome, jealous, supremely gifted men to support a fundamental shift in the purpose of the war? The best answer can be found in Lincoln’s compassion, self-awareness, and humility. He never allowed his ambition to consume his kindheartedness. “So long as I have been here,” Lincoln maintained, “I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man’s bosom.”

In his everyday interactions with the team, there was no room for mean-spirited behavior, for grudges or personal resentments. He welcomed arguments within the cabinet but would be “greatly pained,” he warned his colleagues, if he found them attacking one another in public. Such sniping “would be a wrong to me; and much worse, a wrong to the country.” The standards of decorum he demanded were based on the understanding that they were all involved in a challenge “too vast for malicious dealing.” This sense of common purpose had guided the formation of the cabinet and would now sustain its survival.

Understand the emotional needs of the team.

An ongoing attentiveness to the multiple needs of the complex individuals in his cabinet shaped Lincoln’s team leadership. From the start Lincoln recognized that Seward, with his commanding national and international reputation, merited the preeminent position of secretary of state and required special treatment. Not only attracted by Seward’s cosmopolitan glamour and the pleasure of his sophisticated company but also sensitive to his colleague’s hurt pride in losing the Republican presidential nomination that had widely

been expected to be his, Lincoln frequently crossed the street to pay a visit to Seward's townhouse at Lafayette Park. There the two men spent long evenings before a blazing fire, talking, laughing, telling stories, developing a mutually bolstering camaraderie. Lincoln formed an equally intimate, though less convivial, bond with the high-strung, abrasive Stanton. "The pressure on him is immeasurable," Lincoln said of "Mars," as he affectionately nicknamed his war secretary. Lincoln was willing to do anything he could to assuage that stress, if only by sitting with Stanton in the telegraph office, holding his hand as they anxiously awaited bulletins from the battlefield.

Reliant above all on Seward and Stanton, Lincoln was aware of the jealousy engendered by the specter of favoritism. Accordingly, he found exclusive time for each team member—whether flagging down Welles on the pathway leading from the White House to the Navy Department, suddenly dropping in at Chase's stately mansion, dining with the entire Blair clan, or inviting Bates and Smith for conversation on late-afternoon carriage rides.

"Every one likes a compliment," Lincoln observed; people need praise for the work they do. He frequently penned notes to his colleagues, expressing his gratitude for their actions. He publicly acknowledged that Seward's suggestion to await a military victory before issuing the proclamation was an original and useful contribution. When he had to issue an order to Welles, he assured his "Neptune" that it was not his intention to insinuate "that you have been remiss in the performance of the arduous and responsible duties of your Department, which I take pleasure in affirming had, in your hands, been conducted with admirable success." When compelled to remove one of Chase's appointees, he understood that the prickly Chase might well be resentful. Not wanting the situation to deteriorate, he called on Chase that evening. Placing his long arms on Chase's shoulders, he patiently explained why the decision was necessary. Though the ambitious Chase often chafed under Lincoln's authority, he acknowledged that "the President has always treated me with such personal kindness and has always manifested such fairness and integrity of purpose, that I have not found myself free to throw up my trust...so I still work on."

Refuse to let past resentments fester.

Lincoln never selected members of his team “by his like, or dislike of them,” his old friend Leonard Swett observed. He insisted that he did not care if someone had done wrong in the past; “it is enough if the man does no wrong hereafter.” Lincoln’s adherence to this rule opened the door to Stanton’s appointment as secretary of war, despite a troubled early history between the two men. They had first crossed paths on a major patent case in Cincinnati. Stanton, a brilliant and hard-driving lawyer, had already earned a national reputation; Lincoln was an emerging figure only in Illinois. One look at Lincoln—hair askew, shirt stained, coat sleeves and trousers too short to fit his long arms and legs—and Stanton turned to his partner, George Harding: “Why did you bring that d—d long armed Ape here... he does not know anything and can do you no good.” And with that, Stanton dismissed the prairie lawyer. He never opened the brief Lincoln had meticulously prepared, never consulted him, didn’t even speak a word with him.

Out of that humiliation, however, came a powerful self-scrutiny on Lincoln’s part, a savage desire to improve himself. He remained in the courtroom the entire week, intently studying Stanton’s legal performance. He had never before “seen anything so finished and elaborated, and so thoroughly prepared.” Stanton’s partner recalled that although Lincoln never forgot the sting of that episode, “when convinced that the interest of the nation would be best served by bringing Stanton into his cabinet, he suppressed his personal resentment, as not many men would have done, and made the appointment.”

“No two men were ever more utterly and irreconcilably unlike,” Stanton’s private secretary observed. Whereas Lincoln would give “a wayward subordinate” too many chances “to repair his errors,” Stanton “was for forcing him to obey or cutting off his head.” Whereas Lincoln was compassionate, patient, and transparent, Stanton was blunt, intense, and secretive. “They supplemented each other’s nature, and they fully recognized that they were a necessity to each other.” Before the end of their partnership, Stanton not only revered Lincoln; he loved him.

Control angry impulses.

When infuriated by a colleague, Lincoln would fling off what he called a “hot” letter, releasing all his pent wrath. He would then put the letter aside until he had cooled down and could attend to the matter with a clearer eye. When his papers were opened at the beginning of the 20th century, historians discovered a raft of such letters, with Lincoln’s notation underneath: “never sent and never signed.”

Such forbearance set an example for the team. One evening Lincoln listened as Stanton worked himself into a fury against one of the generals. “I would like to tell him what I think of him,” Stanton stormed. “Why don’t you?” suggested Lincoln. “Write it all down.”

When Stanton finished the letter, he returned and read it to the president. “Capital,” Lincoln said. “Now, Stanton, what are you going to do about it?”

“Why, send it, of course!”

“I wouldn’t,” said the president. “Throw it in the waste-paper basket.”

“But it took me two days to write.”

“Yes, yes, and it did you ever so much good,” Lincoln said. “You feel better now. That is all that is necessary. Just throw it in the basket.” And after some additional grumbling, Stanton did just that.

Not only would Lincoln hold back until his anger subsided and counsel others to do likewise; he would readily forgive intemperate public attacks on himself. When an unflattering letter Blair had written about Lincoln in the early days of the war unexpectedly surfaced in the press months later, the embarrassed Blair carried the letter to the White House and offered to resign. Lincoln told him he had no intention of reading it, nor any desire to exact retribution. “Forget it,” he said, “and never mention or think of it again.”

Protect colleagues from blame.

Time and again, Welles marveled, Lincoln “declared that he, and not his Cabinet, was in fault for errors imputed to them.” His refusal to let a subordinate take the blame for his decisions was never more apparent than in his public defense of Stanton after McClellan attributed the Peninsula disaster to the War Department’s failure to send sufficient troops. A vicious public assault upon Stanton ensued, with subsequent calls for his resignation.

To create a dramatic backdrop that would garner extensive newspaper coverage, Lincoln issued an order to close down all the government departments at one o’clock so that everyone might attend a massive Union rally on the Capitol steps. There Lincoln directly countered McClellan’s charge. He insisted that every possible soldier available had been sent to reinforce the general. “The Secretary of War is not to blame for not giving what he had none to give.” Then, as the applause mounted, Lincoln continued: “I believe [Stanton] is a brave and able man, and I stand here, as justice requires me to do, to take upon myself what has been charged on the Secretary of War.” Lincoln’s robust and dramatic defense of his beleaguered secretary summarily extinguished the campaign against Stanton.

In the end it was Lincoln’s character—his consistent sensitivity, patience, prudence, and empathy—that inspired and transformed every member of his official family. In this paradigm of team leadership, greatness was firmly grounded in goodness. And yet, beneath Lincoln’s tenderness and kindness, he was without question the most complex, ambitious, willful, and implacable leader of them all. His team members could trumpet self-serving ambitions; they could criticize Lincoln, mock him, irritate him, infuriate him, exacerbate the pressure upon him. Everything would be tolerated so long as they pursued their jobs with passion and skill, so long as they were headed in the direction he had defined for them.

Certainly there was no perfect unanimity on September 22, 1862, when Lincoln told the cabinet he was ready to publish his preliminary proclamation. Differences of opinion and reservations persisted. Welles remained vexed, but if the president was willing to take the full weight of responsibility, he was ready to assent. “Fully satisfied” that the president had

accorded every argument a “kind and considerate consideration,” Chase came aboard. Smith abandoned his threat to resign, and Blair never took up Lincoln’s invitation to file written objections. When the proclamation appeared in newspapers the following day, the entire cabinet, unlikely as it had first appeared, stood behind the president. When it counted most, they presented a united front.

Winning over the skeptics in his own cabinet was but an early step in the journey to reunite the nation. A hundred days remained between the publication of the Emancipation Proclamation and its intended activation, on January 1, 1863. They were not to be tranquil ones. This distressing period would provide a critical test of Lincoln’s leadership. As Blair had predicted, conservative resentment against the proclamation produced withering results for Republicans in the midterms. “We have lost almost everything,” Lincoln’s secretary, John Nicolay, lamented. In December the Union army fell into the trap of “a slaughter pen” at Fredericksburg, leaving 13,000 Union soldiers dead or wounded. A blizzard of recriminations beset the president from all sides.

Keep your word.

As the first of January drew near, the public displayed a “general air of doubt” as to whether the president would follow through on his pledge to put the proclamation into effect on that day. Critics predicted that its enactment would foment race wars in the South, cause Union officers to resign their commands, and prompt 100,000 men to lay down their arms. The prospect of emancipation threatened to fracture the brittle coalition that had held Republicans and Union Democrats together.

“Will Lincoln’s backbone carry him through?” wondered a skeptical New Yorker. Those who knew Abraham Lincoln best would not have posed that question. All through his life, the honor and weight of his word had been ballast to his character. “My word is out,” Lincoln told a Massachusetts congressman, “and I can’t take it back.”

Though often frustrated by Lincoln's slowness in issuing the proclamation, the abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass had come to believe that Lincoln was not a man "to reconsider, retract, and contradict words and purposes solemnly proclaimed." Correctly, he judged that Lincoln would "take no step backward," that "if he has taught us to confide in nothing else, he has taught us to confide in his word."

Gauge sentiment.

The day before the New Year, Lincoln convened his cabinet a third time for a final reading of the proclamation. The version he presented differed in one major respect from the one published in September. For months, abolitionists had argued for enlisting blacks in the armed services. Lincoln had hesitated, regarding such a radical step as premature and hazardous for his fragile coalition.

Now, however, he decided the time had come. "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present," he told Congress. "As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew." A new clause declaring that the army would commence with the recruitment of blacks had been inserted in the proclamation, along with a humble closing appeal, suggested by Secretary Chase, for "the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

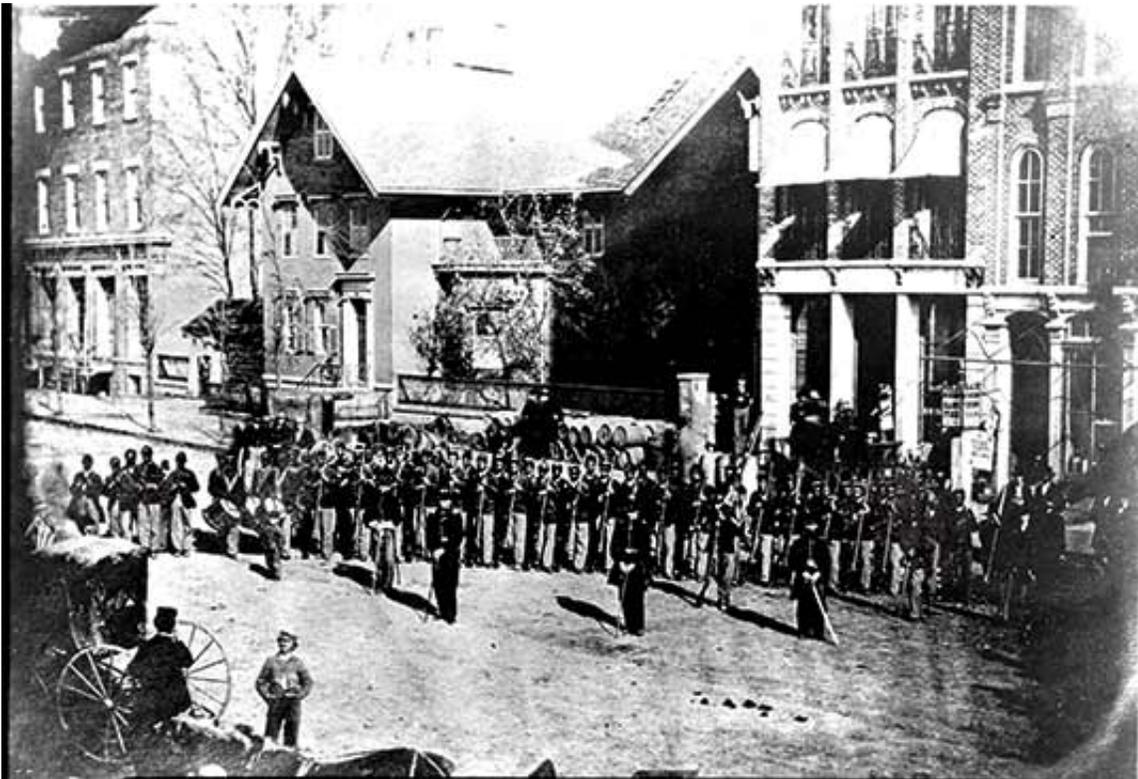
Across New England reaction to the proclamation was "wild and grand," with "Joy and gladness," "sobs and tears," according to Douglass. That jubilation, however, was not shared in the border states or, for that matter, in much of the rest of the North. If a marginal victory at Antietam had muted opposition to emancipation, the humiliating defeat at Fredericksburg and the ensuing winter stalemate had raised anger to full volume. In Congress, "Peace Democrats," popularly known as Copperheads, capitalizing on the protracted slough of morale, opposed the new conscription laws and even went so far as to openly encourage soldiers to desert. Anecdotal reports from the army camps suggested that emancipation was having a negative effect on the soldiers, numbers of whom claimed they had been deceived—they had signed up to fight for the Union, not for the Negro.

But Lincoln knew how to read the public's mood. When his old friend Orville Browning raised the specter of the North's uniting behind the Democrats in their "clamor for compromise," Lincoln predicted that if the Democrats moved toward concessions, "the people would leave them." Nor was he worried that emancipation would splinter the army. While he conceded that wavering morale had inflamed tensions over emancipation and might lead to desertions, he did not believe that "the number would materially affect the army." On the contrary, those inspired by emancipation to volunteer would more than make up for those who left. Lincoln was certain, he told the swarm of doubters, that the timing was right for this repurposing of the war.

Indeed, nowhere was the effect of Abraham Lincoln's transformative leadership illustrated more sharply than in soldiers' changed attitudes toward emancipation. During the first 18 months of the war, only three out of 10 soldiers professed a willingness to risk their lives for emancipation. The majority were fighting solely to preserve the Union. That ratio shifted in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation. Following Lincoln's lead, an overwhelming majority of soldiers came to view emancipation and the restoration of the Union as inseparably linked. How had Lincoln transferred his purpose to those men?

Establish trust.

The response of the troops was grounded in the deep trust and loyalty Lincoln had earned among rank-and-file soldiers from the very beginning of the war. In letters they wrote home, accounts of his empathy, responsibility, kindness, accessibility, and fatherly compassion for his extended family were commonplace. They spoke of him as one of their own; they carried his picture into battle. Such was the credibility that Lincoln had established with them that it was no longer a question of fighting solely for the Union. "If he says all Slaves are hereafter Forever Free," wrote one soldier, "Amen." Another confessed that he had "never been in favor of the abolition of slavery" but was now "ready and willing" to fight for emancipation. A new direction had been set and accepted.



Part of the 127th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry—the first completely African-American regiment recruited in Ohio—probably in 1863. It was later redesignated the 5th Regiment, United States Colored Troops.

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Nothing would drive home the transformative power of the Emancipation Proclamation more powerfully than the recruitment and enlistment of black soldiers. Blacks responded fervently to the enlistment call. Not only did they sign up in record numbers—adding nearly 200,000 troops to the Union war effort—but, according to official testimony, they fought with striking gallantry. “I never saw such fighting as was done by the negro regiment,” General James G. Blunt wrote after one early engagement. “They fought like veterans with a coolness and valor that is unsurpassed.” After the battle at Port Hudson, a white officer openly confessed, “You have no idea how my prejudices with regard to negro troops have been dispelled by the battle the other day. The brigade of negroes behaved magnificently

and fought splendidly; could not have done better.” Even commanders formerly opposed to his proclamation, Lincoln stressed, now “believe the emancipation policy, and the use of colored troops, constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion.”

Lincoln had carefully observed “this great revolution in public sentiment slowly but surely progressing.” He was a keen listener and monitored the shifting opinions of his cabinet members. He was a shrewd reader, noting the direction of the wind in newspaper editorials, in the tenor of conversations among people in the North, and most centrally, in the opinion of the troops. Although he had known all along that opposition would be fierce when the proclamation was actuated, he judged that opposition to be of insufficient strength “to defeat the purpose.” This acute sense of timing, one journalist wrote, was the secret to Lincoln’s gifted leadership: “He always moves in conjunction with propitious circumstances, not waiting to be dragged by the force of events or wasting strength in premature struggles with them.” As Lincoln himself pointed out, “With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.”

CONCLUSION

At a time when the spirits of the people were depleted and war fatigue was widespread, Lincoln had gotten a powerful second wind. Where others saw the apocalyptic demise of the Founders’ experiment, he saw the birth of a new freedom.

“Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history,” he told Congress a month before he put the Emancipation Proclamation into effect. “The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation....In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth.”

In a great convergence of the man and the times, Abraham Lincoln’s leadership imprinted a moral purpose and meaning on the protracted misery of the Civil War.

Doris Kearns Goodwin is a historian and the Pulitzer Prize–winning author of several biographies of U.S. presidents, including *No Ordinary Time*, *Team of Rivals*, *The Bully Pulpit*, and *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*. Her newest book is *Leadership in Turbulent Times* (Simon & Schuster, September 2018).

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J McMillian 10 months ago

Very good article. However, as neither a democrat or Republican I had to smirk at the utter whitewashing of the author towards the Democratic party. Possessing the diaries of my Great Great Grandfather, who was a surgeon fighting for the North, I certainly have his recollections on the party, and the Copperheads. His brother also a doctor who fought in the same regiment wrote about same. Sadly his writing disappeared from archives. Most likely because he called out those in the Democratic party who were vehemently fighting to retain slavery in the North, and were actively sabotaging those fighting against slavery.

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