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An Examination of Abraham Lincoln's Racial Views

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Research + Scholarship SYMPOSIUM



An Examination of Abraham Lincoln's Racial Views

Despite the overwhelming amount of writings that exist on the subject of Abraham Lincoln, there seems to be no clear consensus regarding what his personal views on race were. Depending on the work, Abraham Lincoln has been painted as either a color-blind Great Emancipator or a secret white supremacist who actively worked against the emancipation movement. With the recent debate over the Confederate flag and other race-related issues, the need to clarify the teachings on Lincoln has perhaps rarely been more relevant. This study examines his own writings, his public speeches, and the recollections of those who knew him in the context of the time in which Lincoln lived. His voting record as both a district and state Senator is also be examined, and the claims made by some that these records show an inconsistency with his professed viewpoint are disproved. By examining these pieces of evidence a new viewpoint is discovered. This study shows that Abraham Lincoln was neither the heroic Great Emancipator of myth nor the secret white supremacist, but instead a man with much more complicated and nuanced views that ultimately desired the separation of the races so that both could flourish. These findings have been compared and contrasted with other works on the subjects and supported by quotes from Lincoln himself.