To: Librarians hosting *Forever Free*
From: Susan Saidenberg, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is delighted to co-sponsor the touring exhibition, *Forever Free: Abraham Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation*, which your library is hosting. Rare documents, letters and broadsides from the Gilder Lehrman Collection were paired with documents from the Huntington Library to develop this exhibition. John Rhodehamel, Norris Foundation Curator of American Historical Manuscripts, The Huntington Library, served as exhibition curator.

One of the goals of this project is to expand educational outreach in your community. Document-based traveling exhibitions, in particular, share the results of research and support the mission of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Founded in 1994, the Gilder Lehrman Institute promotes the love and study of American history. The Institute organizes seminars and enrichment programs for teachers and National Park Service educators; creates history-centered high schools nationwide; supports and produces publications and exhibitions for students and the general public; and sponsors lectures by historians.

For further information about the Institute, visit [www.gilderlehrman.org](http://www.gilderlehrman.org).

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“Slave Market of America.” Published by the American Anti-Slavery Society, New York, 1836.

Beginning in the 1830s, abolitionist societies printed millions of broadsides to expose the brutality of slavery. “Slave Market of America” asserts that slavery violates the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution. The image of Washington D.C., as home of the free is eclipsed by an image of the nation’s capital on the right as “Land of the Oppressed.” (The Gilder Lehrman Collection)

Questions for discussion:

1. What do you see in this picture?
2. We are told that this person is a free citizen. How is it possible for a free citizen to be sold into slavery?
3. How would you describe the attitude of the crowd towards the sale of people into slavery?
4. What does this picture illustrate about the nature of slavery?
5. Why do you think this poster would be an effective tool for the abolitionists?
Frederick Douglass. *Autograph Sentiment signed, November 19, 1860.*

Born a slave, Frederick Douglass escaped to freedom in 1838 and became one of America’s most brilliant abolitionists. In 1845, eight years after escaping from slavery, Douglass published his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave. Written by himself,* which attracted public support for abolition. He dedicated himself to the cause of emancipation and championed civil rights for all Americans. In this autograph manuscript, Douglass reacts to President Abraham Lincoln’s public statement that his primary concern was to save the Union.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. How does Frederick Douglass define liberty?
2. What does Douglass mean when he talks of “…the right of each man to own his body and soul…”?
3. How does this document reflect the events of 1860?
4. Why is Douglass impatient with Lincoln’s position on slavery in 1860?
5. How do Douglass’s words speak to us today?
This then is my autograph and something more. I am for liberty, the right of each man to own his own body and soul. Whatever may be his colour wherever he may be born—whether of the race or a mother I am for liberty. Now and always to the weak as well as the strong. I am for liberty. Universal liberty wherever the haughty trample never his head or the dejected slave drag a chain. —Frederick Douglass

Rochester, November 10, 1863
Abraham Lincoln, manuscript speech fragment about slavery and American government, ca. 1857-1858.

In this document, Lincoln articulates two principles that informed his vision: a government founded on equal rights, and a faith in self-improvement as key to the future of America. He notes that every slave knows he has been wronged when denied the fruits of his labor: “Most governments have been based, practically, on the denial of the equal rights of men... ours began, by affirming those rights.... We proposed to give all a chance, and we expected the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant, wiser; and all better and happier together.” (The Gilder Lehrman Collection)

Questions for discussion:

1. Based on this document, did Lincoln support or oppose slavery?
2. How does this quote “The ant, who has toiled and dragged a crumb to his nest, will furiously defend the fruit of his labor...” support Lincoln’s beliefs?
3. How does Lincoln prove that slavery is logically wrong?
4. Why does Lincoln believe that the American system of government is a model for the world?
5. What is Lincoln’s view of America’s future?
dent truth—Made so plain by our good Father in Heaven, that all free and sensible, it even opens to brute, and creeping insect. The ant, who has toiled and dragged a crumb to his nest, will fiercely defend the fruit of his labor against whatever suffers to assail him—So plain, that the most dumb and stupid, who ever toiled for a master, never, constantly know that he is wronged. So plain that no one, high or low, ever does mistake it, except in a plain, peaceful way; for although volumes upon volumes is written to prove slavery a very good thing, we never hear of the man who wishes to take the goods of it, by being a slave himself.

Most governments have been based, practically, on the denial of the equal rights of men; and here, in part, is their fault. They began by affording them no rights. They paralyze some men and too ignorant and vicious, to share in government. Possibly, perhaps we, and, by your system, you would always keep them ignorant, and vicious. We proposed to give all a chance, and we expect you, the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant, wiser; and all better, and happier together.

We made the experiment, and the fruit is before us. Look at it, think of it. Look at it, in its aggregate grandeur, of extent of country, and number of population; of ships, and steamers, and mails
Abraham Lincoln, manuscript fragment of “House divided” speech, ca. 1857.

In this draft, Abraham Lincoln formulates some of the ideas that he will advance in his speech accepting the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate in 1858. Lincoln identifies slavery as a moral and political issue that threatens the continued existence of the United States. Invoking the famous biblical words, “A house divided against itself cannot stand,” he declares, “I believe this government cannot endure permanently, half slave, and half free.” (The Gilder Lehrman Collection)

In the fragment of the speech below, delivered in May 1858, Abraham Lincoln opposes the doctrine of popular sovereignty associated with the Kansas – Nebraska Act, Stephen Douglas, and the Dred Scott decision. Lincoln articulates the views that he will expand upon in his “House Divided Speech,” on June 16, 1858 at the Republican State Convention in Springfield, Illinois. This speech was written before the debates with Stephen Douglas, apparently in response to Douglas’s speech of December 9, 1857.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why does Lincoln refer to Kansas in the first line of his speech?
2. What does Lincoln mean by “a house divided against itself cannot stand”?
3. Would you agree or disagree with the above statement?
4. Why is Lincoln appalled by the Dred Scott decision?
5. Lincoln said “this government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free.” Based on your knowledge of Lincoln, what would his hope for the Union be?
...lith of the real question... 

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

I believe this government can not endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved - I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be a union - it will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and put it on course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will put it forward like it shall become the dominant in all the states, old as well as new. Do you want it? Study the Dred Scott decisions, and other cases, how little, even now, remains to be done.

That decision may be reduced to three points: The first, that a negro can not be a citizen - that point is made in order to deprive the negro in every possible event, of the benefit of that provision of the U. S. Constitution which declares that: "The citizens of each state shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states."

The second point is, that the U. S. Constitution protects slavery, as property, in all the U. S. territories, and that neither Congress, nor the people of the territories, nor any other power, can proscribe it, at any time prior to the formation of state constitutions.

This point is made, in order that the territories may safely be filled up with slaves, before the formation of state constitutions, and thereby to embarras the question..."

The Emancipation Proclamation was a carefully crafted document in which Lincoln, as Commander in Chief, justified emancipation as a military act against the states in rebellion. In reality, it transformed the war into a moral crusade to end slavery. On January 1, 1863, when the Emancipation Proclamation became effective, slaves in the states in rebellion were declared “forever free.” It was both a tactical war measure and a transformation of the national purpose. Strategically, it undermined the Confederacy and bolstered the Union army with the prospect of African American enlistment. Though it was to weaken the Republican Party in the election of 1864, the Proclamation made the war into a fight to end slavery.

This extremely rare lithograph, with suitably patriotic decoration, was designed by a fourteen-year-old boy from California. Abraham Lincoln signed it. (The Gilder Lehrman Collection)

Questions for discussion:

1. What did Lincoln mean when he said that emancipation was “...essential to the preservation of the Union”?

2. The daughter of a fugitive slave wrote President Lincoln that by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation the “...action of yours will make the Angels sing your praises...” Why did she place Lincoln in the company of angels?

3. Why was it a political risk for Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation?

4. Why did many believe that the Emancipation Proclamation would become a turning point in the Civil War?

5. Although slaves did not receive immediate freedom following the Emancipation Proclamation, it is considered one of the great documents in American history. How can this be explained?
Abraham Lincoln
President of the United States

by virtue of the powers in me vested as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixtythree, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days from the day of the first aforesaid order, and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the said insurrection or rebellion, existing on the day of the aforesaid proclamation, shall then be found, the following, to wit: Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans; Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia; and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomack, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as they were prior to the proclamation, were not then raised.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States, are and shall be free; and that the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States, to garrison posts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

But upon this, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I am constrained to issue the present proclamation, and to take up your arms for the justice of your country and the world.

Almighty God

[Signature]

Abraham Lincoln
"The Gallant Charge of the Fifty Fourth Massachusetts (Colored) Regiment."
Published by Currier & Ives, New York, 1863.

The 54th Massachusetts Colored Regiment was organized in February 1863. This infamous charge led by Colonel Robert Shaw, has entered the realm of “legend.” The bravery of African Americans at the Battle of Fort Wagner gained them lasting fame when they launched a heroic but doomed assault on Confederate positions at Fort Wagner near Charleston, South Carolina, on July 18, 1863. This battle is depicted in this print by Currier and Ives.

Questions for discussion:

1. Why is this print called The Gallant Charge of the 54th Massachusetts?
2. How does the charge of the 54th argue against bigotry and racism?
3. This Currier and Ives lithograph has been reprinted thousands of times in newspapers. How might this illustration alter public opinion?
Photograph of anonymous private, Company I, 54th Massachusetts Infantry, ca. 1863.

Even as they were authorized to enlist in the Union Army, African Americans still faced discrimination. They were relegated to separate regiments commanded by white officers, and they received less pay than white soldiers. Nonetheless, the pride evident in this soldier’s portrait confirms Frederick Douglass’s prediction that Americans would respect the black soldier once he had “an eagle on his button, a musket on his shoulder, and the star spangled banner over his head.” (The Gilder Lehrman Collection)

Questions for discussion:

1. Does this picture represent a revolutionary change in the United States?
2. How did African Americans dispel the myth that they lacked courage under fire?
3. Why did many African Americans enlist in the army despite receiving lower wages than their white counterparts?
4. Why did Lincoln say that African American participation in the war effort was critical for the Union victory?
“Men of Color, To Arms! To Arms!” Philadelphia, ca. 1863.

During the early years of the Civil War, Frederick Douglass lobbied Abraham Lincoln to organize black regiments and proclaim emancipation. The President postponed the decision, awaiting a decisive Union victory, which he got at Antietam in September 1862. After the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect in January 1863, Douglass toured the country leading recruitment drives, entreating African Americans to “join in Fighting the Battles of Liberty and the Union.” (The Gilder Lehrman Collection)

Questions for discussion:

1. Explain the purpose of this broadside.
2. Why do the authors use the expression, “Now or Never”?
3. Why is this broadside a unique document?
4. If you were a young African American in 1863, would you have enlisted? Why?
MEN OF COLOR
TO ARMS! TO ARMS!
NOW OR NEVER!

This is our golden moment! The Government of the United States calls for every able-bodied Colored Man to enter the Army for the

Three Years' Service!

And join in fighting the Battles of Liberty and the Union. A new era is open to us. For generations we have suffered under the horrors of slavery, outrage and wrong; our manhood has been denied, our citizenship blotted out, our souls scorched and burned, our spirits cowed and crumpled, and the hopes of the future of our race involved in doubt and darkness. But now our relations to the white race are changed. Now, therefore, is our most precious moment. Let us rush to arms!

FAIL NOW, & OUR RACE IS DOOMED

Omit the soul of our birth. We must now awake, arise, or be forever fallen. If we value liberty, if we wish to be free in this land, if we love our country, if we love our families, our children, our homes, we must strike now while the country calls; we must rise up in the dignity of our manhood, and show by our own right arms that we are worthy to be freemen. Our enemies have made the country believe that we are craven cowards, without soul, without manhood, without the spirit of soldiers. Shall we die with this stigma resting upon our graves? Shall we leave this inheritance of shame to our children? No, a thousand times, NO! We WILL Rise! The alternative is upon us. Let us rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Want is life without liberty! We say that we have manhood; now is the time to prove it. A nation or a people that cannot fight may be pitied, but cannot be respected. If we would be regarded men, if we would forever silence the tongue of prejudice and hate, let us Rise, Now and Fly to Arms! We have seen what Valor and Heroism our Brothers displayed at Fort Hudson and Milliken's Bend, though they are just from the gallows, poisoning group of slavery, they have startled the world by the most exalted heroism. If they have proved themselves heroes, cannot WE PROVE Ourselves Men?

ARE FREEMEN LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES

More than a million White Men have left comfortable homes and joined the Army of the Union to save their Country. Cannot we leave ours, and swell the Ranks of the Union, to save our freedom, vindicate our manhood, and deserve well of our Country. MEN OF COLOR! the Englishman, the Irishman, the Frenchman, the German, the American, have been called to assert their claims to freedom and a manly character, by an appeal to the sword. The day that has seen the enshrined face of Adams in arms, is, in all history, seen their last tour. We now see that our last opportunity has come. If we are not better in the scale of humanity than Englishmen, Irishmen, White Americans and other Rovers, we can show it now. Men of Color, Brothers and Fathers, we appeal to you, by all your pride, for your Country and your liberty, by all your desire for Citizenship and Equality before the law, by all your love for the Country, to step at once, now, and you are beneficent and forever freemen.


A Meeting in furtherance of the above named object will be held

And will be Addressed by
Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

In his Second Inaugural Address, on March 4, 1865, Abraham Lincoln identified slavery as the basic cause of the war, attributing its duration to God's terrible judgment against those who "gave the offence of slavery." The Civil War was the bloodiest in the nation's history. Some 620,000 soldiers died and comparable casualties were wounded. Looking to the future, Lincoln concluded "With malice towards none and charity for all [let us] do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves..."

Questions for discussion:

1. Explain Lincoln's belief that the Civil War was God's punishment for the sin of slavery.
2. By the time of the Second Inaugural Address, it was clear that the Union would triumph. How does Lincoln envision that victory?
3. Why is this speech often considered religious as well as political?
Fellow Countrymen:

At this second appearance to take the oath of the Presidential Office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed very fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented.

The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends—how well known to the public is to itself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All talked of proscriptions. All feared it, all sought to avoid it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this position, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide it perniciously by negotiation.

Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would accept war rather than let the nation subside, and the other would accept war rather than let it persist, and the war came.

Eighteighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and secure this interest was an object for which the insurgents would fight the Union by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected war; neither party then had any prejudice against in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans; to do all which may promote the public happiness and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.
"The Fifteenth Amendment Celebrated." New York, 1870.

The passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments fulfilled the Civil War’s promise of freedom. The Fifteenth Amendment gave constitutional status to the Emancipation’s promise of freedom. The artist depicts African Americans’ hopes for their future under freedom: the right to education, a stable family life, jobs, and the vote. Surrounding the scene of celebration in Washington D.C. are portraits of Douglass and Lincoln, icons of the quest for freedom. (The Gilder Lehrman Collection)

Questions for discussion:

1. How do the different frames in this illustration celebrate the Fifteenth Amendment?
2. As a result of the Fifteenth Amendment, African Americans gained the right to vote. Why was this so important?
3. The print includes portraits of individual Americans. Name as many of the individuals as you can and indicate how each is connected to the Fifteenth Amendment.
4. How does this lithograph depict Americans living in freedom?