CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE ABOLISHMENT OF SLAVERY WITH RESPECT TO LINCOLN THE MOVIE

Eshaan Gupta, BBA LLB, Symbiosis Law School, Hyderabad

ABSTRACT

American Slavery was at its peak in the 1840s. Steven Spielberg is a professional director with numerous contributions to the world of cinema and numerous awards to his name. He has directed a documentary that provides us with an insight into how Lincoln abolished slavery, how the civil war affected the United States and tells us about Lincoln’s happenings. This paper is a study on why and how slavery was abolished in the United States of America and the thirteenth amendment. Slavery started in 1776 with the founding of the legal institution and was legal until 1865 when the thirteenth amendment was passed. The fight to abolish slavery sparked a civil war, which resulted in the secession of several states from the United States of America, giving rise to the Confederate States of America, a pro-slavery coalition of states. So, this paper will include a censorious analysis right from the day Lincoln took office in March 1861 till the end of slavery when the 13th amendment was passed in 1865. This paper highlights the efforts of President Abraham Lincoln in abolishing slavery.

Keywords: Slavery, Thirteenth Amendment
Introduction:

This paper is written with reference to the movie “Lincoln” by Steven Spielberg, a professional movie director, and producer. The historical genesis for this movie is a 2005 book Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln by the author Doris Kearns Goodwin. Instead of focusing on the broad Civil War conflicts, the film focuses on the frenetic activity surrounding the implementation of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution, which prohibited enslavement of people in the final days of the Civil War. This movie also tells us about what the president did daily and how he lived his life. This 2 hour and 30-minute long movie highlight the struggle of Abraham Lincoln’s dangerous life as Civil conflict and tumultuous situations characterized his whole term of presidency. Slavery and involuntary servitude have been abolished by the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, except as a punishment for a crime. Many southern states declared secession from the United States after Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election in 1860 on the promise of ending slavery. In 1862, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which aimed to get slavery abolished. The film focuses on the difficulties that the Emancipation Proclamation encountered, including being dismissed by the courts and how the 13th amendment could be overturned by slave states that were returning to the Union. The American civil war is still the deadliest conflict in the history of America and is a heavily studied event of American history by numerous scholars. This is a sincere effort put forward by the director to give society a proper look at how President Abraham Lincoln ended slavery in the United States and lost his life in the process.

Research Methodology:

The approach taken in this study will be doctrinal, analytical, and descriptive in nature. The majority of the study material, such as journal articles and newspaper pieces, will be secondary in character.

Literature Review:

- **THE 13TH AMENDMENT AND SLAVERY IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY**¹

  This article examines America’s history of slavery and the trading of slaves to

determine the concepts that underpin the Thirteenth Amendment. It explains how, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Court transformed these essential ideas into a changing industrial milieu in reaction to the rise of domestic peonage systems. It then provides a model for applying these same key concepts to the rising global economy, laying the groundwork for a more current and relevant Thirteenth Amendment interpretation in the process.

- **ABRAHAM LINCOLN: SELF-MADE MAN**

  This article brushes upon Abraham Lincoln’s life and explains how he is a self-made man. Abraham Lincoln has been considered by several Americans as the archetypal self-made guy. His incredible fight to rise from low beginnings to the pinnacle of accomplishment. Lincoln, an accomplished mythmaker, Rather than romanticizing his own parents and childhood, Lincoln mocked them throughout his life. In fact, Lincoln purposefully centered his whole political career around a personal triumph over inherited misfortune.

- **SLAVERY IN AMERICA**

  This article aims to highlight the long and tumultuous history of racial injustice in America and how it is a tough and sometimes painful subject to tackle. Slavery, the racial violence and destruction that followed Reconstruction’s conclusion, and legitimised racial segregation and servitude are all examples of racial injustice and intolerance in the United States. Issues that still exist now make it difficult to discuss this time of history. Racial disparities persist in terms of health, employment, education, and opportunity. Racial profiling and abuse of black and brown adults and children, in many communities, racial dynamics in criminal justice systems, as well as mass imprisonment, cause enormous pain and disruption.

- **MONTGOMERY SLAVE TRADE**

---


The purpose of this study report is to bring attention to the slave market in Montgomery, Alabama, and to provide information about it. Montgomery’s role in the slave trade was heightened due to it being so close to a region called Black Belt, where slaveholders congregated vast slave populations to labour in the rich fields.

- **Slaves and Education: Tennessee as a Slave State Where the Instruction of Slaves Was Not Prohibited**

  Due to a lack of documents directly related to Tennessee’s enactment, the author tries to present corroborative evidence, such as early settlers’ liberal attitudes toward black people’s education, particularly in East Tennessee, the lack of solidarity among the slaveholding class, and the small percentage of the black population.

- **Slave Trading in a New World: The Strategies of North American Slave Traders in the Age of Abolition**

  This Article discusses how James D’Wolf, a very renowned slave trader in the history of the United States of 1791, allegedly threw a slave overboard during a slave voyage for having smallpox to save the other crew members and slaves, and how he was acquitted due to his physically good motive to save the other crew members and slaves, and then compares this situation to current life situations and discusses how slavery is still present in the current world.

- **When Did the Confederate States of America Free the Slaves?**

  There is a long tradition of counterfactual conjecture about how American history might have turned out differently if the South had won the Civil War. From Winston Churchill’s classic 1933 essay through filmmaker Kevin Willmott’s 2004 mockumentary, this piece analyses counterfactual accounts of slave emancipation.

---


• **USING CONFEDERATE DOCUMENTS TO TEACH ABOUT SECESSION, SLAVERY, AND THE ORIGINS OF THE CIVIL WAR**

This piece does exactly what its title claims: it informs the reader about the Confederacy, secession, slavery, and how the civil war originated. It is essentially a compilation of several Confederate texts that are used appropriately to deliver valuable information.

• **THE DANGEROUS THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT**

This essay considers as a result of history, how our political imagination has been impeded. To avoid unpleasant similarities with the economic and political captivity of wage labourers and women, the anti-Republican idea of slavery was narrowed. Following the abolition of chattel slavery, labour activists attempted to resurrect the older concept of “slavery.” However, emancipation permitted proponents of the status quo to assert that American society had now become “free.” Slavery is still considered exaggerated rhetoric and even a potential insult to African American chattel slaves.

• **LINCOLN AND THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT**

This brief and simple journal article provides its readers in great detail about what happened when the thirteenth amendment was passed and how it was passed; its conciseness is why it was used in the current research study.

**Movie Analysis:**

In January of the year 1865, Abraham Lincoln had began his second term in office as the U.S President, a very popular leader, thanks to his down-to-earth demeanour. The country, meanwhile, was in upheaval, the Civil War had already reached its fourth year and many troops had been killed on both sides. The passage of the 13th amendment to the Constitution, which would abolish slavery, would not only accomplish something that Lincoln was so passionate

---


about, but it would also bring the war to a close, as slavery is a major reason for the fight. The amendment had already been passed in the Senate, and it was decided to be voted on by the House of Representatives nearing the end of January. While Lincoln was confident that his Republican peers would vote yes, he will have to hammer away to ensure that a sufficient number of Democrats vote yes, which could require some compromising in other areas. Some other factors which could sway the decision, such as the Confederates in the conflict present their own agreement which agrees to end the war on the basis that slavery isn’t abolished. Simultaneously, Lincoln has to deal with his supportive but chaotic and messy marriage to Mary Todd Lincoln, and their newest prospective split arising because Robert Todd Lincoln, their oldest son, wanted to leave law school and join the army.

**Conclusion:**

Lincoln is one of the rare movies that succeed on almost every level, where each character, scene, are firing on all cylinders to make a film worth repeated viewings. It portrays the life of Abraham Lincoln in a wonderful way and really allows the viewer to imagine and understand Lincoln’s life. The movie also is a great portrayal of the American Civil War and the problems relating to the passing of the 13th amendment to the U.S Constitution. The 13th amendment to the U.S Constitution made it illegal to practice slavery in the country. The 13th amendment was not an easy amendment to pass as much of the United States was pro-slavery and decided to secede from the union which resulted in a civil war, the amendment had many hindrances in its way but was eventually passed and marked an end to the civil war with the confederacy joining the union again. Overall the movie has done an excellent job to show the impediments faced by Lincoln in passing the amendment and the tumultuous Civil war.
References:


