

# Introduction

1863 was one of the most defining years in American history. Embroiled in the nation's deadliest conflict, the principles and ideals of the founding fathers met their greatest test as the rest of the world watched and waited. The irony of this story is the way historians and researchers have reached such opposite conclusions from the same actions and events. The focus of this publication is the manner in which Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party represented their platform during the 1860 election only to reverse their position in 1864.

Conservative ideologies dominated the first half of the nineteenth century. In Mid-May of 1860, the fledgling Republican Party held its national convention in the city of Chicago. They had failed miserably in the 1856 presidential election when their candidate, former California Senator John C. Frémont, received only 33.1% of the popular vote. He also failed to carry his home state of California.

As the convention began, the front runner was New York Senator William H. Seward. Although Seward had a large following, many Republicans worried that his anti-slavery rhetoric had inspired John Brown's insurrection at Harper's Ferry, Virginia and feared that his stance on slavery could be counterproductive to the goals of the party. Other strong contenders for the nomination were former Free-Soiler Salmon P. Chase along with Edward Bates and Simon Cameron who were former members of the anti-immigration Know Nothing Party. A lesser known and more moderate candidate was former railroad attorney and congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln. His well-publicized debates with Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas gave him credibility as a presidential candidate. Although Lincoln insisted that the white race would always hold a superior position in society, he made it known he was opposed to slavery and dedicated to restricting the expansion of it. Despite being personally opposed to slavery, he contended that the Federal government had no authority to interfere with slavery in the States where it existed. This stance on slavery became a part of the 1860 Platform.

As convention delegates struggled with platform issues, Lincoln's popularity grew and Seward's popularity declined. Other stances taken by Lincoln during his campaign seemed to fall perfectly in line with the sentiments of many delegates. Lincoln favored a strong central government, a trans-continental railroad and believed in promoting immigration through the free distribution of government lands. All of these were prominent issues within the Party. As expected, the struggle by delegates to agree on a Republican Presidential Nominee was intense. After three close votes, Lincoln emerged victorious.

Delegates adopted seventeen resolutions as their 1860 platform. The third resolution contains the title of this book. It begins by proclaiming that the United States as a nation owes its prosperity to the union of states and further resolves that:

*“. . . we hold in abhorrence all schemes for disunion, come from whatever source they may. And we congratulate the country that no Republican member of Congress has uttered or countenanced the threats of disunion so often made by Democratic members, without rebuke and with applause from their political associates; and we denounce those threats of disunion, in case of a popular overthrow of their ascendancy as denying the vital principles of a free government, and as an avowal of contemplated treason, which it is the imperative duty of an indignant people sternly to **rebuke and forever silence.**”*

The Republican Party was heir to the Federalist views of Alexander Hamilton. A majority of its members were former Whigs who held strong to Federalist principles. The Whig Party was crushed by the dominance of anti-federalist and conservative beliefs and had lost all of their political influence by the mid-1850s. A divisive issue in the nineteenth century was one that is equally contentious in our society today. Put very mildly, it was the issue of how much power should be vested in the Federal government. A carry-over from bitter struggles which reached a boiling point during the ratification of the United States Constitution, the issue grew hotter with each passing year. To complicate matters, opposing views were becoming increasingly sectional with liberal views being most dominant in the north and conservative views begin most dominant in the south. Decades of ever increasing tensions resulted in the deadliest war in American

history. Attempting to tell the story of how the United States reached the point of war is a monumental task. Bringing to light the impact of the war on today's society is just as difficult.

Many historians have concluded that the War Between the States was a glorious struggle for human rights and racial equality while others contend that if slavery had been the only issue, war would have been unlikely. It has become increasingly popular to demean any historian that believes that the War Between the States was anything other than a war about slavery. These historians are often labeled as revisionists, Southern apologists or neo-confederates. Countless books have been written about the so called "*Lost Cause*" of the Confederacy while few examine the cause of the Union during the war; more importantly, the cause of the Republican Party.

The story told in this book is neither new history, nor unpublished history and it is not a revisionist history. It is any many ways, the same history that has been written by most authors. The most crucial difference between this publication and other written histories is its focus on key elements that are often overlooked. A prime example would be the statement that:

"The first ten amendments to the United States Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights."

Few, if any historians will dispute that this phrase is historically accurate. However, when most Americans are asked to identify the most important word in that statement, they almost unanimously select the word "*Rights*." Americans rarely focus on the word "*Amendments*." They seldom realize that the Constitution had to be amended to include those rights that we hold most dear. Some of our founding fathers were willing to deny us those rights for the sake of a strong central government. This belief is the same liberal federalist belief that was the backbone of the Republican Party in the nineteenth century.

So what was the true agenda of the Republican Party in 1860? They had a master plan for the new territories. It would be populated by white Protestants, perpetuating John Winthrop's "*Model of Christian Charity*" as a "*City upon a Hill*." The 1860 Republican Party Platform outlined the requirements to carry out this plan. They needed a Trans-Continental railroad from the north to California, free land for

immigrants, increased tariffs, improved seaports, and have all of this under the complete control of the federal government; a government which they intended to control.

What they did not want in the new territories was Negroes, Mexicans, Indians, Catholics, Jews or Mormons. Every western state and territory already had exclusion laws preventing free blacks and Mexicans from immigrating into the new frontier but the obstacles to such a plan were very clear. They could not allow slavery. As Lincoln stated; If blacks were never introduced in the new territories, there would be no blacks in the new territories. Efforts for the removal of Mormons and Indians from the new territories were already under way but needed to be stepped up. New laws would have to be passed to increase tariffs, build western sea ports and open up government lands to immigrants. Perhaps the greatest threat to the plan was disunion. In 1860, Republicans were clear in their promise to the Southern States that they would not interfere with slavery where it existed and that they would never be threatened with military force.

So what was the meaning of the words “*rebuke and forever silence?*” The Republican Party was determined to remove the word “*Sovereignty*” from the American vocabulary. All resistance to the power of the federal government would have to be crushed.

From 1861 through mid 1863, most of the goals of the Republican Party had been met. The Confederate Army was driven from northern soil at the Battle of Gettysburg. The Confederacy was split by Union control of the Mississippi River after the fall of Vicksburg, Mississippi but suddenly in the fall of 1863, the Republican machine came to a grinding stop. Confederate forces at Chickamauga Creek in Georgia, delivered a devastating blow to the Union army with decisive victory. Diplomatic negotiations with France, Spain and Great Britain were at a standstill, forcing Lincoln to enter into an alliance with Russia. Americans in the north were growing tired of the death and carnage of war and many began to demand a peaceful solution. Lincoln’s nemesis, George McLellan announced his candidacy for President as a Peace Democrat. It was at this point that the Republican Party parted ways with Lincoln. The Republican Party could not afford for the war to end without total subjugation of the south. Few people, including Lincoln, believed that he would be re-elected. Republicans chose John C. Frémont, once again as their presidential candidate

and Lincoln was forced to call upon the money men of the Union League to gain the nomination of the new National Union Party. Through clever negotiations, Lincoln convinced Frémont to withdraw from the presidential race, leaving the Republican Party with no candidate. General Sherman's burning of Atlanta and devastating the State of Georgia, brought Lincoln back into favor with many of the Republicans and diminished much of the demand for a peaceful resolution to the war. Both Lincoln and the Republican Party had changed their platform and more importantly had changed the story of what the war was fought over. A president who stated during his inaugural address in 1861 that he had neither the lawful right nor the inclination to interfere with slavery where it existed was proclaiming in 1865 that abolishing slavery had been his cause and that:

*“ . . . until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword . . . it must be said, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”*

The platform of the Republican Party in 1860 was so radically different that of 1864 that one platform or the other would have to be filled with complete lies. Which platform was a lie and which platform was true, is a subject that continues to be debated.

The beauty of history is that both its villains and its heroes are convicted by their own words and actions. In a complete reversal of their previous platform, the 1864 Republican Party claimed that it was continuing the war effort in an attempt to free the black race from the bonds of slavery and implying that their righteous acts had been ordained by God. What they did not mention is that they were simultaneously cleansing the western frontier of Native Americans and unwanted religious groups; a practice that their party would support well into the twentieth century. They were also ignoring the demands of America's women. There was nothing in the resolves of the Republican Party which provided equality for all Americans.

The following pages contain historical accounts from the Jamestown Colony in 1607 all the way to the present. The events of 1863 were not spontaneous. The trail to the bloodiest conflict in American history is a long one. Understanding how we reached the breaking point requires an understanding of the nation's founders, the war for independence, issues dealing with the United States Constitution, and the motives of the Republican Party. This book makes no

attempt to suggest that the readers should adopt a certain opinion. It is filled with accurate accounts of actions taken by America's leaders and tells the story in their own words. These are words as they were spoken not accounts transcribed and transformed by the persuasion of public sentiments. Once you have read the story you will likely have the same heroes as before but you may have to accept some bitter truths about these characters and America as a whole. It is likely that the story will meet with a great deal of *rebuke* in some social or political circles but it is unlikely that the truth will be *forever silenced*.