

Democratic Party Platform 1860 (Breckinridge Faction)

by (Southern) Democratic Party Platform Committee

June 23, 1860

[When the Democratic Party reconvened in Baltimore in June to try to overcome their differences, intense and bitter infighting between northern and southern factions recommenced. Northern Democrats supported Stephen Douglas and wanted a platform that emphasized the principle of popular sovereignty for the territories. Southerners bitterly opposed Douglas and demanded a platform that called for direct congressional protection for slavery in the territories. Between the Charleston and Baltimore conventions, the Douglas faction had recruited alternative slates of delegates from some of the southern states whose delegations had walked out of the Charleston Convention. After the Baltimore Convention voted to seat these delegates, rather than fully recognize the return of the delegates who had withdrawn, an even broader group of Southern delegates and their allies withdrew. These Southern Democrats then met as an alternative Democratic Convention to adopt an alternative platform and nominate John Breckinridge of Kentucky for president and Joseph Lane of Oregon for vice president.]

Resolved, That the platform adopted by the Democratic party at Cincinnati [in 1856] is affirmed, with the following explanatory resolutions:

First—That the government of a Territory organized by an act of Congress is provisional and temporary, and during its existence all citizens of the United States have an equal right to settle with their property in the Territory, without

their rights, either of person or property, being destroyed or injured by Congressional or Territorial legislation.

Second—That it is the duty of the Federal Government, in all its departments, to protect, when necessary, the rights of the persons and property in the Territories, and wherever else its constitutional authority extends.

Third—That when the settlers in a Territory, having an adequate population, form a State Constitution, the right of sovereignty commences, and being consummated by admission into the Union, they stand on an equal footing with the people of other States; and a State thus organized ought to be admitted into the Federal Union, whether its Constitution prohibits or recognizes the institution of slavery.

Resolved, That the Democratic party are in favor of the acquisition of the island of Cuba, on such terms as shall be honorable to ourselves and just to Spain, at the earliest practicable moment.

Resolved, That the enactments of State Legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law, are hostile in character to, and subversive of, the Constitution, and revolutionary in their effect.

Resolved, That the Democracy of the United States recognize it as an imperative duty of the Government to protect naturalized citizens in all their rights, whether at home or in foreign lands, to the same extent as its native-born citizens.

Whereas, One of the greatest necessities of the age, in a political, commercial, postal, and military point of view, is a speedy communication between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the National Democratic party do hereby pledge themselves to use every means in their power to secure the passage of some bill, to the extent of the constitutional authority of Congress, for the construction of a Pacific Railroad from the Mississippi River or the Pacific Ocean, at the earliest practicable moment.

Constitutional Union Party Platform

May 09, 1860

[The Constitutional Union Party was formed in 1860 as a home for those fearing disunion, who viewed the positions taken by each of the other parties as furthering the growing sectional divide. With disproportionate support in the Upper South, it was also attractive to many conservative ex-Whigs and American Party adherents, with the surviving leadership of both those parties approving of its creation. The resulting coalition was similar to that which supported Millard Fillmore in 1856, especially, but not exclusively, in the Upper South.

At its Baltimore convention, the Party determined to take no platform positions other than to reaffirm its dedication to the Constitution, the Union of the States, and the rule of law. It's most prominent leader, Kentucky senator John J. Crittenden, was the ex-Whig successor to Henry Clay, and would play a major role in unsuccessfully seeking compromises to avert the southern secession of 1861. But at 73, he was considered too old to be the party's presidential candidate. Other prominent members included Texas Governor Sam Houston. The Convention chose ex-Tennessee Senator John Bell (over Houston) as its presidential nominee and ex-Massachusetts Senator Edward Everett as its vice presidential nominee.

In the Election, the Constitutional Union Party would represent the principle opposition in the South to the Breckinridge faction of the Democratic Party. Although many of the leaders of the party were quite old (leading to their party being nicknamed "the Old-Man's Club"), many supporters of the Party would become leading figures within unionist efforts in the Upper South during the secessionist crisis and the early Civil War.]

Whereas, Experience has demonstrated that Platforms adopted by the partisan Conventions of the country have had the effect to mislead and deceive the people, and at the same time to widen the political divisions of the country, by the creation and encouragement of geographical and sectional parties; therefore

Resolved, that it is both the part of patriotism and of duty to recognize no political principle other than THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNTRY, THE UNION OF THE STATES, AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAWS, and that, as representatives of the Constitutional Union men of the country, in National Convention assembled, we hereby pledge ourselves to maintain, protect, and

defend, separately and unitedly, these great principles of public liberty and national safety, against all enemies, at home and abroad; believing that thereby peace may once more be restored to the country; the rights of the People and of the States re-established, and the Government again placed in that condition of justice, fraternity and equality, which, under the example and Constitution of our fathers, has solemnly bound every citizen of the United States to maintain a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Democratic Party Platform 1860 (Douglas Faction)

by (Northern) Democratic Party Platform Committee

June 18, 1860

[In April of 1860, Democrats met in Charleston, South Carolina, to select their nominee. At that time, Charleston was a city overrun by secessionist passions. Disagreement over the platform caused Lower South delegates to withdraw from the convention after delegates affiliated with Stephen Douglas refused to concede to southern demands for a platform endorsing a federal slave code. In Charleston, Douglas could not secure the two-thirds majority needed to win the nomination, after the parliamentarian ruled that the withdrawal of the Southern delegates did not reduce the number of delegates needed and the Convention declined to override that ruling. The Convention then recessed, leaving both the question of the nominee and the platform unresolved.]

In June of 1860, Democrats reconvened in Baltimore to try to settle their differences. The Lower South delegates who had withdrawn reappeared at the convention, prompting bitter infighting over the seating of rival delegations. When the Douglas supporters won, an even broader group of Southerners left the convention, and the remaining delegates passed the Douglas' factions favored platform and nominated Stephen Douglas for the presidency. Senator Benjamin Fitzpatrick of Alabama was initially selected for the vice presidency, but he declined. Instead, a Georgia moderate named Herschel Johnson was selected for the position.]

Resolved, That we, the Democracy of the Union, in Convention assembled, do hereby declare our affirmation of the resolutions unanimously adopted and declared as a platform of principles by the Democratic Convention at Cincinnati, in the year 1856, believing that Democratic principles are unchangeable in their

nature when applied to the same subject matters; and we recommend, as the only further resolutions, the following:

Inasmuch as difference of opinion exists in the Democratic party as to the nature and extent of the powers of a Territorial Legislature, and as to the powers and duties of Congress, under the Constitution of the United States, over the institution of slavery within the territories,

Resolved, That the Democratic party will abide by the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States upon these questions of Constitutional law.

Resolved, That it is the duty of the United States to afford ample and complete protection to all citizens, whether at home or abroad, and whether native or foreign born.

Resolved, That one of the necessities of the age, in a military, commercial and postal point of view is speedy communication between the Atlantic and Pacific States, and the Democratic party pledge such constitutional power of the Government as will insure the construction of a railroad to the Pacific coast at the earliest practicable period.

Resolved, That the Democratic party are in favor of the acquisition of Cuba on such terms as shall be honorable to ourselves and just to Spain.

Resolved, That the enactments of State Legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law, are hostile in character and subversive to the Constitution, and revolutionary in their effects.

Resolved, That it is in accordance with the Cincinnati Platform that during the existence of Territorial Governments the measure of restriction, whatever it may be, imposed by the Federal Constitution on the power of the Territorial

Legislature over the subject of the domestic relations, as the same has been, or shall hereafter be finally determined by the Supreme Court of the United States, should be respected by all good citizens, and enforced with promptness and fidelity by every branch of the General Government.

ulations, but in the teeth of Congressional legislation supposed to be valid at the time. This shows that there is vigor enough in Slavery to plant itself

in a new country even against unfriendly legislation. It takes not only law but the *enforcement* of law to keep it out.

15

John Brown Addresses the Court (1859)

Up until the time of his raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, John Brown had led a life of repeated failure. Brown's sanity has been a subject of debate ever since, and certainly his invasion of Virginia was ill-conceived and ineptly executed. He planned to seize the weapons from the government armory, arm the slaves, and lead an insurrection to overthrow slavery in Virginia, but no slaves joined Brown's band, the townspeople soon pinned the raiders down in a few buildings where they were holed up, and before long Brown and most of his men were either killed or captured by U.S. troops. But if Brown demonstrated his military incompetence in the attack on Harpers Ferry, he subsequently displayed a genius for playing the role of an anti-slavery martyr. He vetoed any plans to attempt to rescue him from the Charleston, Virginia, jail and used the trial to publicize his strong antislavery convictions. To his wife he wrote from his jail cell, "I have been whiped as the saying is, but am sure I can recover all lost capital occasioned by that disaster, by only hanging a few moments by the neck; & I feel quite determined to make the utmost possible out of a defeat." His finest moment occurred at his sentencing when he made the following statement to the court. Brown's statement was not entirely forthright, but it produced widespread admiration, even among his enemies. One jurist reported that Brown spoke "with perfect calmness of voice and mildness of manner, winning the respect of all for his courage and firmness."

I have, may it please the Court, a few words to say.

In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted: of a design on my part to free slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter, when I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moving them through the country, and finally leaving them in Canada. I designed to have done the same

thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection, and that is that it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved— . . . had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would

FROM Oswald Garrison Villard, *John Brown, 1800-1859* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), pp. 498-99.

have been all right. Every man in this Court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This Court acknowledges, too, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed, which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament, which teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to remember them that are in bonds as bound with them. I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I

say I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done, in behalf of His despised poor, I did no wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I say, let it be done.

16

RICHMOND ENQUIRER

The Harpers Ferry Invasion Has Advanced the Cause of Disunion (1859)

As soon as John Brown was captured in his abortive raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, southern whites became convinced that the Republican party was behind Brown's invasion, and they persisted in this belief even when a subsequent senatorial investigation failed to implicate any prominent Republican party leader in the attack. The following editorial from the Richmond Enquirer reflects this widespread southern viewpoint. It also notes the connection between the raid and growing disunion sentiment in the South, fueled by the fear that the Republicans would triumph in the 1860 presidential election.

The Harper's Ferry Invasion as Party Capital

The tone of the conservative press of the North evinces a determination to make the moral of the Harper's Ferry invasion an effective weapon to rally all men not fanatics against that [Republican] party whose leaders have been implicated directly with this midnight murder of Virginia citizens, and the destruction of Government property. This is certainly legitimate—and we do most sincerely hope that the horror with which the whole country

is justly filled, may be the means of opening the eyes of all men to the certain result of the triumph of an "irrepressible conflict" leader, or of any man, by an alliance with the Black Republican Ossawattomites of the North. This great wrong and outrage has been perpetrated by men from the North. It is but just and proper that a disclaimer should be made by the Northern press, but the voice of the press is not enough, the voice of the *people* at the North, through the polls, is necessary to restore confidence and to dispel the belief that the Northern people have aided and abetted this treasonable invasion of a Southern State.

If the success of a party is of more importance than the restoration of good feeling and attach-

ment to the Union, let that fact go forth from the polls of New York at her approaching election. . . . The vile clamor of party, the struggle of Republicanism for power, has given an impetus to the abolition zeal of old Brown and his comrades, that impelled them forward in their mad career of treason and bloodshed. The leader of the Republican forces [William Henry Seward] gave utterance to the treasonable declaration of "an irrepressible conflict," and if the people of New York really repudiate the dogma that has vitalized pillage, robbery and murder, and raised up a body of men to initiate the "irrepressible conflict," let them send from the polls greetings of overthrow that shall, if possible, restore confidence, and cement the broken fragments of attachment for the Union. The triumph of the Black Republicans in the State of New York will be encouragement to future Ossawatimites, to again attempt the plunder and invasion of Virginia; the defeat of this "irrepressible conflict" party will speak thunder tones of encouragement and hope to the people of the Southern States; such a defeat will tend to allay that excitement which now slumbers under inexpressible in-

dignation, and which a spark may light into a conflagration destructive to the Union.

The voice of the Southern people has not been heard. . . . Let not the people of the North mistake this silence for indifference. There exists a horror and indignation which neither press nor public meetings can express; a feeling that has weakened the foundations of the Union, and which may at any moment rase the superstructure. . . .

The Harper's Ferry invasion has advanced the cause of Disunion, more than any other event that has happened since the formation of the Government; it has rallied to that standard men who formerly looked upon it with horror; it has revived, with ten fold strength the desire of a Southern Confederacy. The, heretofore, most determined friends of the Union may now be heard saying, "if under the form of a Confederacy, our peace is disturbed, our State invaded, its peaceful citizens cruelly murdered, and all the horrors of servile war forced upon us, by those who should be our warmest friends; if the form of a Confederacy is observed, but its spirit violated, *and the people of the North sustain the outrage*, then let disunion come."

17

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

I Have Seen Nothing Like the Intensity of Feeling (1859)

Born into a prosperous and notable Cambridge, Massachusetts, family, Charles Eliot Norton was a well-known writer, scholar, and editor. As part of the literary circle that shone so brightly in prewar Boston, he was a frequent contributor to the Atlantic Monthly, edited by his friend James Russell Lowell. Like most members of polite Boston society, he was in sentiment antislavery, but his opposition stemmed more from what he considered the institution's negative impact on whites than from any egalitarian zeal or racial concern. During the war, Norton was a leading figure in the Loyal Publication Society, which disseminated prowar propaganda, and also served as an editor of the North American Review. In this letter to a cousin in England, dated December 13, 1859, a week after Brown's execution, he discusses with particular acuteness John Brown's impact on northern public opinion.

Y ou can hardly have formed an idea of the intensity of feeling and interest which has prevailed throughout the country in regard to John Brown. I have seen nothing like it. We get up excitements easily enough, but they die away usually as quickly as they rose, beginning in rhetoric and ending in fireworks; but this was different. The heart of the people was fairly reached, and an impression has been made upon it which will be permanent and produce results long hence.

. . . There was at first no word of sympathy either for Brown or his undertaking. But soon came the accounts of the panic of the Virginians, of the cruelty with which Brown's party were massacred; of his noble manliness of demeanour when, wounded, he was taken prisoner, and was questioned as to his design; of his simple declarations of his motives and aims, which were those of an enthusiast, but not of a bad man,—and a strong sympathy began to be felt for Brown personally, and a strong interest to know in full what had led him to this course. Then the bitterness of the Virginia press, the unseemly haste with which the trial was hurried on,—and all the while the most unchanged, steady, manliness on the part of "Old Brown," increased daily the sympathy which was already strong. The management of the trial, the condemnation, the speech made by Brown, the letters he wrote in prison, the visit of his wife to him,—and at last his death, wrought up the popular feeling to the highest point. Not, indeed, that feeling or opinion have been by any means unanimous; for on the one side have been those who have condemned the whole of Brown's course as utterly wicked, and regarded him as a mere outlaw, murderer, and traitor, while, on the other, have been those who have looked upon his undertaking with satisfaction, and exalted him into the highest rank of men. But, if I am not wrong, the mass of the people, and the best of them, have agreed with neither of these views. They have, while condemning Brown's scheme as a criminal attempt to right

a great wrong by violent measures, and as equally ill-judged and rash in execution, felt for the man himself a deep sympathy and a fervent admiration. They have admitted that he was guilty under the law, that he deserved to be hung as a breaker of the law,—but they have felt that the gallows was not the fit end for a life like his, and that he died a real martyr in the cause of freedom.

. . . The earnestness of his moral and religious convictions and the sincerity of his faith made him single-minded, and manly in the highest degree. There was not the least sham about him; no whining over his failure; no false or factitious sentiment, no empty words;—in everything he showed himself simple, straightforward and brave. . . . And game he was to the very last. He said to the sheriff as he stepped onto the platform of the gallows, "Don't keep me waiting longer than is necessary,"—and then he was kept waiting for more than ten minutes while the military made some movement that their officers thought requisite. This gratuitous piece of cruel torture has shocked the whole country. But Brown stood perfectly firm and calm through the whole. . . .

What its results will be no one can tell, but they cannot be otherwise than great. One great moving fact remains that here was a man, who, setting himself firm on the Gospel, was willing to sacrifice himself and his children in the cause of the oppressed, or at least of those whom he believed unrighteously held in bondage. And this fact has been forced home to the consciousness of every one by Brown's speech at his trial, and by the simple and most affecting letters which he wrote during his imprisonment. The events of this last month or two (including under the word events the impression made by Brown's character) have done more to confirm the opposition to Slavery at the North, and to open the eyes of the South to the danger of taking a stand upon this matter opposed to the moral convictions of the civilized world,—than anything which has ever happened before, than all the anti-slavery tracts and novels that ever were written.

FROM Sara Norton and M. A. DeWolfe Howe, eds., *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), pp. 197–201.

#NeverLincoln: Abolitionists and the 1860 Election

by Curtis Harris

August 9, 2016

....

During the 1860 presidential election, abolitionists were faced with questions that nagged at their conscience and pulled upon their practical instincts: should they support Abraham Lincoln as the Republican Party's nominee for president? Or should they refrain from party politics until a pure abolition ticket appeared?

In retrospect, it might seem peculiar that people dedicated to the physical and political freedom of African Americans would hesitate in supporting Lincoln. But a look back at their own words and goals juxtaposed with the political stand made by Lincoln in 1860 reveals why many of the abolitionists, if given social media in 1860, might have emphatically tweeted #NeverLincoln.

I DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE ANTI-SLAVERY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In *The Struggle for Equality*, historian James McPherson summed up the abolitionists' dilemma with Abraham Lincoln after the Illinois politician had surprisingly secured the Republican nomination for president in 1860:

“Abolitionists were understandably perplexed about this man Lincoln. He was plainly *against* slavery, but he was just as plainly not *for* its immediate and total abolition. The *Annual Report* of the American Anti-Slavery Society [AASS] considered Lincoln ‘a good enough Republican for the party’s purposes, but far from being the man for the country’s need.’ He was ‘a sort of bland, respectable middle-man, between a very modest Right and the most arrogant and exacting Wrong; a convenient hook whereon to hang appeals at once to a *moderate* anti-slavery feeling and to a timid conservatism.’”

In his famous and widely hailed Cooper Union Address in New York City, Lincoln in a single sentence provided the rhetorical ammunition that fueled the AASS's critique of his politics: "Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation; but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the National Territories, and to overrun us here in these Free States?"

Preventing slavery's spread into the "National Territories" wasn't the unvarnished spirit of abolitionism, which demanded an immediate end to slavery and also equal rights for African Americans. However, the non-extension doctrine was the glue that held together the unwieldy, newly-formed Republican coalition composed of defunct Whigs, disgruntled Democrats, erstwhile Know-Nothings, and Free Soilers. Abolitionists were merely a small, albeit vocal, component of the Republican coalition. And they indeed made their voices heard on Lincoln's immediate opposition to expanding – not eradicating – slavery.

Edmund Quincy, in June 1860, observed Lincoln's non-extension policy and concluded the November election would bring "a new administration pledged to the support of slavery in our Southern States, and this equally, whether success be to the Democrats or the Republicans."

Josephine Griffing, in August 1860, griped that the Republicans were playing a two-faced political game since their "great effort is to convince the public mind that they are not Abolitionists," while also convincing "the Abolitionists, that they *hate* slavery as much as they do."

A month before Griffing's letter, William Lloyd Garrison fumed at the Republican Party's attempts to distance itself from the abolitionist movement: "The Republican party means to do nothing, can do nothing, for the abolition of slavery in the slave states. The Republican party stands on a level with the Fugitive Slave Law."

W.A. Hunter of Ohio railed against other abolitionists who would contemplate voting for Lincoln, a man who "ignores all the principles of humanity in the colored race, both free and slave; and as abolitionists claim the right to freedom of the one class, and political equality to the other, how can they be consistent, to say nothing of honest, in supporting such a man?"

Perhaps most searing was the angry retort to Lincoln made by black Illinoisan, Hezekiah Ford Douglass, who chastised Lincoln not only for the perceived timidness of his slavery policies, but also his views on civil rights:

“I do not believe in the anti-slavery of Abraham Lincoln. He is on the side of this Slave Power of which I am speaking, that has possession of the Federal Government.... I went through the State of Illinois for the purpose of getting signers to a petition, asking the Legislature to repeal the Testimony Law, so as to permit colored men to testify against white men. I went to prominent Republicans, and among others to Abraham Lincoln and Lyman Trumbull, and neither of them dared to sign that petition to give me the right to testify in a court of justice! If we sent our children to school, Abraham Lincoln would kick them out, in the name of Republicanism and anti-slavery! ... I care nothing about that anti-slavery which wants to make the Territories free, while it is unwilling to extend to me, as a man, in the free States, all the rights of a man.”

As incendiary, ridiculing, and disgruntled as these abolitionists were in their condemnation of the Republican Party’s nominee, it appears that most abolitionists who voted in the 1860 election did so en masse for Lincoln after surveying the political landscape.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW AND BETTER ERA

If Lincoln was a flawed choice, the alternatives in the 1860 election were downright appalling for the abolitionist: Northern Democrat Stephen Douglas, Southern Democrat John Breckinridge, and John Bell of the Constitutional Union Party.

Lincoln’s perennial nemesis, Douglas habitually tossed about “Black Republicans” as a verbal insult taunting white Republicans sympathizing (no matter how slightly) with black Americans. Unsurprisingly, in the 1858 Ottawa [Illinois] debate, Douglas appealed to white supremacy in his successful attempt to defeat Lincoln in the Illinois senate race. Douglass’s extended taunt of emancipation and political rights for blacks linked Lincoln and Republicans to such dangerous schemes, as Douglass perceived them:

“Do you desire to strike out of our State Constitution that clause which keeps slaves and free negroes out of the State, and allow the free negroes to flow in, and cover your prairies with black settlements? Do you desire to turn this beautiful State into a free negro colony, in order that when Missouri abolishes slavery she can send one hundred thousand emancipated slaves into Illinois, to become citizens and voters, on an equality with yourselves? If you desire negro citizenship, if you desire to allow them to come into the State and settle with the white man, if you desire them to vote on an equality with yourselves, and to make them eligible to office, to serve on juries, and to adjudge your rights, then support Mr. Lincoln and the Black Republican party, who are in favor of the citizenship of the negro.

“For one, I am opposed to negro citizenship in any and every form. I believe this Government was made on the white basis. I believe it was made by white men for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and I am in favor of confining citizenship to white men, men of European birth and descent, instead of conferring it upon negroes, Indians, and other inferior races.”

Southern Democrat John Breckinridge in September 1860 attacked the notion that the federal government could interfere with slavery in the territories. Breckinridge buttressed his claim with the logic that white slaveholders’ taxes supported the federal territories’ governments, therefore the government was obligated to protect their property right in slaves in all the territories. Meanwhile, John Bell’s campaign put out a book chronicling his moderate but decidedly pro-slavery credentials dating back to the 1830s.

With those options, it’s no wonder that abolitionists like Oliver Johnson, who edited the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, steeled themselves to vote Lincoln. Johnson in the fall of 1860 wrote that the Republican Party’s imperfections on the slavery question still presented “the beginning of a new and better era.... it seems utterly preposterous to deny that Lincoln’s election will indicate growth in the right direction.”

Perhaps another positive sign from the abolitionists’ perspective on Lincoln’s potential was the sheer dread his anti-slavery policies inspired in Southern “fire eaters” who would soon lead the Confederacy.

Mississippi Governor John Pettus addressed his state's legislature on November 30, 1860, as they began deliberating seceding from the United States. Although his words came *after* the election results, they illustrated the fear Lincoln and "Black Republicans" instilled in the white planter class. "It would be as reasonable to expect the steamship to make a successful voyage across the Atlantic with crazy men for engineers," Pettus reasoned "as to hope for a prosperous future for the South under Black Republican rule." Pettus continued that the Lincoln administration and "Black Republican politics and free negro morals" would turn the state into "a cesspool of vice, crime and infamy."

On the opposite side of the political spectrum, Frederick Douglass positively assessed Lincoln's winning presidential bid. He directly addressed the idea of anti-slavery Lincoln paving the road to a true abolition policy down the line: "Lincoln's election has vitiated [the slave power's] authority, and broken their power.... More important still, it has demonstrated the possibility of electing, if not an Abolitionist, at least an *anti-slavery reputation* to the Presidency."

Whether hypercritical, lukewarm, or supportive of Lincoln, abolitionists of all stripes could look out with a certain bewilderment that just five years after Lincoln's first election in 1860 an amendment abolishing slavery would indeed be added to the Constitution; that the Supreme Court would be led by radical Republican Salmon Chase replacing the staunchly pro-slavery Roger Taney; that the Supreme Court would also admit John Rock as the first black lawyer to practice before that bench; and that the House of Representatives were led in prayer by a black minister, Henry Garnet, for the first time.

Although Lincoln could hardly be considered their first or preferred choice, it would be hard to imagine that a President Breckinridge, Douglas or Bell would have provided the abolitionists with a national, supportive platform to propel the essence, if not the complete substance, of their policies.

Lydia Maria Child, a week after Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, perhaps summed up best the reconciled abolitionists who had first looked on with dismay at Lincoln's nomination, then begrudgingly acquiesced given their practical options, and finally appreciated his positive contributions to their movement:

“I think we have reason to thank God for Abraham Lincoln. With all his deficiencies, it must be admitted that he has grown continuously; and considering how slavery had weakened and perverted the moral sense of the whole country, it was great good luck to have the people elect a man who was *willing* to grow.”

<https://www.lincolncottage.org/neverlincoln-abolitionists-and-the-1860-election/>

Platform of the Alabama Democracy

January 1860

[In January 1860, the Alabama Democratic Party met in convention, and voted to instruct its delegates to that year's National Democratic Convention that they should seek a platform supporting the adoption of a federal slave code to govern all federal territories, and that they should walk out of the convention if such a platform was rejected. This was in response to the position of various northern Democrats, most prominently Stephen Douglas, that the Dred Scott Decision left open a method by which territorial legislatures could effectively hinder the spread of slavery into territories, even if the constitution barred them from directly prohibiting its spread (i.e., "the Freeport Doctrine"). Following Alabama's lead, numerous other southern state Democratic Parties adopted similar resolutions.

N.B., Although sounding unnatural to the modern ear, the word "Democracy" was often used at the time to refer to the Democratic Party. Thus, "The Alabama Democracy" would simply have meant "The Alabama Democratic Party."]

Resolved by the Democracy of the State of Alabama, in Convention assembled, That holding all issues and principles upon which they have heretofore affiliated and acted with the National Democratic party to be inferior in dignity and importance to the great question of slavery, they content themselves with a general re-affirmance of the Cincinnati Platform [the 1856 platform] as to such issues, and also endorse said platform as to slavery, together with the following resolutions:

Resolved further, That we re-affirm so much of the first resolution of the Platform adopted in Convention by the Democracy of this State, on the 8th of January

1856, as relates to the subject of slavery, to wit: “The unqualified right of the people of the slaveholding States to the Protection of their property in the States, in the Territories, and in the wilderness in which Territorial Governments are as yet unorganized.”

Resolved further, That in order to meet and clear away all obstacles to a full enjoyment of this right in the Territories, we re-affirm the principle of the 9th resolution of the Platform adopted in Convention by the Democracy of this State on the 14th of February, 1848, to wit: “That it is the duty of the General Government, by all proper legislation, to secure an entry into those Territories to all the citizens of the United States, together with their property of every description, and that the same should remain protected by the United States while the Territories are under its authority.”

Resolved further, That the Constitution of the United States is a compact between sovereign and co-equal states, united upon the basis of perfect equality of rights and privileges.

Resolved further, That the Territories of the United States are common property, in which the States have equal rights, and to which the citizens of every State may rightfully emigrate with their slaves or other property, recognized as such in any of the States of the Union, or by the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved further, That the Congress of the United States has no power to abolish slavery in the Territories, or to prohibit its introduction into any of them.

Resolved further, That the Territorial Legislatures, created by the legislation of Congress, have no power to abolish slavery, or to prohibit the introduction of the same, or to impair, by unfriendly legislation, the security and full enjoyment of the same within the Territories; and such constitutional power certainly does not belong to the people of the Territories in any capacity, before, in the exercise of a

lawful authority, they form a Constitution preparatory to admission as a State into the Union; and their action in the exercise of such lawful authority certainly cannot operate or take effect before their actual admission as a State into the Union.

Resolved further, That the principles enunciated by Chief Justice Taney, in his opinion in the Dred Scott case, deny to the Territorial Legislature the power to destroy or impair, by any legislation whatever, the right of property in slaves, and maintain it to be the duty of the Federal Government, in *all* of its departments [*i.e., including Congress*], to protect the rights of the owner of such property in the Territories; and the principles so declared are hereby asserted to be the rights of the South, and the South should maintain them.

Resolved further, That we hold all of the foregoing propositions to contain *cardinal principles* -- true in themselves, and just and proper, and necessary for the safety of all that is dear to us, and we do hereby instruct our Delegates to the Charleston Convention to present them for the calm consideration and approval of that body -- from whose justice and patriotism we anticipate their adoption.

Resolved further, That our Delegates to the Charleston Convention are hereby expressly instructed to insist that said Convention shall adopt a platform of principles, recognizing distinctly the rights of the South as asserted in the foregoing resolutions; and if the said National Convention shall refuse to adopt, in substance, the propositions embraced in the preceding resolutions, prior to nominating candidates, our Delegates to said Convention are hereby positively instructed to withdraw therefrom.

Resolved further, That our Delegates to the Charleston Convention shall cast the vote of Alabama as a unit, and a majority of our Delegates shall determine how the vote of this State shall be given.

Resolved further, That an Executive Committee, to consist of one from each Congressional district, be appointed, whose duty it shall be, in the event that our Delegates withdraw from the Charleston Convention, in obedience to the 10th resolution, to call a Convention of the Democracy of Alabama, to meet at an early day to consider what is best to be done.

Republican Party Platform (1860)

May 17, 1860

[In 1860, the Republican Party met in Chicago. There was widespread speculation that William H. Seward would become the party's nominee, being by far the best-known figure in the field. Other contenders included Salmon Chase of Ohio, Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, Edward Bates of Missouri, and Abraham Lincoln of Illinois.]

Although Seward had by far the largest number of delegates committed to him, they were not so many as needed for the nomination, and they were concentrated in the Upper North states expected to vote Republican regardless of the nominee. Moreover, many doubted that Seward would be as strong a candidate as was needed in the Lower North. He was thought to have multiple weaknesses, including (i) his reputation as a radical opponent of slavery and "the slave power" was seen as a liability in the more moderate Lower North states, (ii) his vigorous opposition to nativism was seen as making it more difficult to attract former American Party votes, and (iii) his close connection to the Thurlow Weed political machine in New York would make it more difficult to campaign on anti-corruption messages -- which many Republicans wanted to do, given the alleged corrupt practices of the Buchanan Administration.

In contrast, Lincoln's star was on the rise. Although he had gained a national reputation from his 1858 debates with Douglas and his more recent speaking tours outside Illinois, he had not been considered a serious candidate until shortly before the convention. But his Illinois supporters had skillfully presented his candidacy to other swing state delegations concerned with how a Seward nomination would be received in their states. He was perceived as far more moderate than Seward or Chase and thus likely to do far better in Lower North states, especially as he was from one of those states. Yet he was nonetheless far more focused on the slavery issue than Bates or Cameron (and thus acceptable

to the more antislavery elements of the Party). Moreover, as a self-made man from the old-Northwest, he would be relatively immune to the frequent attacks on Eastern Republican (especially ex-Whigs) as elitists. In effect, they depicted Lincoln as an ideal second choice candidate for all factions of the Party – one who could unite the party and win in the areas most needed for victory. By the third ballot, Lincoln had gained enough votes to secure the party’s nomination.

In order to broaden the Party’s appeal, the platform somewhat moderated the more militant antislavery rhetoric of the 1856 platform, although retaining its strong opposition to any expansion of slavery into federal territories and its views that slavery was exclusively a state institution, i.e., that the Constitution should be understood as an antislavery document. It both reaffirmed a belief in basic principles of states’ rights and emphasized its militant opposition to any disunionism. It condemned the proslavery policies of the Buchanan Administration and the “deception and fraud” of “popular sovereignty.”

It also emphasized a variety of issues not directly related to slavery, but popular throughout the North – e.g., support for homestead legislation that would provide free land to poor settlers wanting to move to western territories, increased tariff protections that would protect developing eastern industries (and associated higher wages), aggressive promotion of a transcontinental railroad, and opposition to public corruption of the kind that had been alleged in the Buchanan Administration.]

Resolved that we, the delegated representatives of the Republican electors of the United States, in convention assembled, in discharge of the duty we owe to our constituents and our country, unite in the following declarations:

First. That the history of the nation during the last four years has fully established the propriety and necessity of the organization and perpetuation of the Republican party, and that the causes which called it into existence are permanent in their nature, and now more than ever before demand its peaceful and constitutional triumph.

Second. That the maintenance of the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the federal Constitution, “That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,” is essential to the preservation of our Republican institutions; and that the federal Constitution, the rights of the states, and the Union of the states, must and shall be preserved.

Third. That to the Union of the states this nation owes its unprecedented increase in population; its surprising development of material resources; its rapid augmentation of wealth; its happiness at home and its honor abroad; and 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.

Fourth. That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the states, and especially the right of each state, to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depends, and we

denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any state or territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes.

Fifth. That the present Democratic Administration has far exceeded our worst apprehension in its measureless subserviency to the exactions of a sectional interest, as is especially evident in its desperate exertions to force the infamous Lecompton Constitution upon the protesting people of Kansas; in construing the personal relation between master and servant to involve an unqualified property in persons; in its attempted enforcement everywhere, on land and sea, through the intervention of Congress and of the federal courts, of the extreme pretensions of a purely local interest, and in its general and unvarying abuse of the power entrusted to it by a confiding people.

Sixth. That the people justly view with alarm the reckless extravagance which pervades every department of the federal government; that a return to rigid economy and accountability is indispensable to arrest the systematic plunder of the public treasury by favored partisans; while the recent startling developments of frauds and corruptions at the federal metropolis, show that an entire change of administration is imperatively demanded.

Seventh. That the new dogma that the Constitution of its own force carries slavery into any or all of the territories of the United States, is a dangerous political heresy, at variance with the explicit provisions of that instrument itself, with cotemporaneous exposition, and with legislative and judicial precedent, is revolutionary in its tendency and subversive of the peace and harmony of the country.

Eighth. That the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom; that as our Republican fathers, when they had abolished slavery in all our national territory, ordained that no "person should be deprived of life, liberty or property, without due process of law," it becomes our duty, by legislation,

whenever such legislation is necessary, to maintain this provision of the Constitution against all attempts to violate it; and we deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States.

Ninth. That we brand the recent reopening of the African slave trade, under the cover of our national flag, aided by perversions of judicial power, as a crime against humanity, and a burning shame to our country and age, and we call upon Congress to take prompt and efficient measures for the total and final suppression of that execrable traffic.

Tenth. That in the recent vetoes by the federal governors of the acts of the legislatures of Kansas and Nebraska, prohibiting slavery in those territories, we find a practical illustration of the boasted Democratic principle of non-intervention and popular sovereignty, embodied in the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and a demonstration of the deception and fraud involved therein.

Eleventh. That Kansas should of right be immediately admitted as a state, under the Constitution recently formed and adopted by her people, and accepted by the House of Representatives.

Twelfth. That while providing revenue for the support of the general government by duties upon imports, sound policy requires such an adjustment of these imposts as to encourage the development of the industrial interests of the whole country, and we commend that policy of national exchanges which secures to the workingmen liberal wages, to agriculture remunerating prices, to mechanics and manufacturers an adequate reward for their skill, labor and enterprise, and to the nation commercial prosperity and independence.

Thirteenth. That we protest against any sale or alienation to others of the public lands held by actual settlers, and against any view of the free homestead policy

which regards the settlers as paupers or suppliants for public bounty, and we demand the passage by Congress of the complete and satisfactory homestead measure which has already passed the House.

Fourteenth. That the Republican party is opposed to any change in our naturalization laws, or any state legislation by which the rights of citizenship hitherto accorded by emigrants from foreign lands shall be abridged or impaired; and in favor of giving a full and efficient protection to the rights of all classes of citizens, whether native or naturalized, both at home and abroad.

Fifteenth. That appropriation by Congress for river and harbor improvements of a national character, required for the accommodation and security of an existing commerce, are authorized by the Constitution and justified by the obligation of government to protect the lives and property of its citizens.

Sixteenth. That a railroad to the Pacific Ocean is imperatively demanded by the interests of the whole country; that the federal government ought to render immediate and efficient aid in its construction; and that, as preliminary thereto, a daily overland mail should be promptly established.

Seventeenth. Finally, having thus set forth our distinctive principles and views, we invite the cooperation of all citizens, however differing on other questions who substantially agree with us in their affirmance and support.