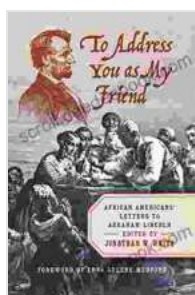


# Voices from the Margins: African Americans Write to Abraham Lincoln, Pleading for Freedom and Equality

Amidst the tumultuous years of the American Civil War, when the nation grappled with the profound moral question of slavery, African Americans emerged as agents of their own destiny, penning poignant and powerful letters to President Abraham Lincoln.



## To Address You as My Friend: African Americans' Letters to Abraham Lincoln by Jonathan W. White

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 22003 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 291 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported



These letters, often written on scraps of paper with trembling hands, transcended mere communication; they became vessels of hope, anguish, resilience, and unwavering determination. In their words, African Americans articulated their innermost thoughts and desires, laying bare their experiences of oppression and their aspirations for freedom and equality.

## A Window into a Hidden History

The collection of letters written to Lincoln by African Americans stands as a remarkable archive, providing invaluable insights into the lives and struggles of a marginalized community during a transformative period in American history.

These letters offer a glimpse into the daily realities of African Americans living under the oppressive weight of slavery, the horrors of forced labor, the brutality of physical and emotional abuse, and the dehumanizing denial of basic rights.

They also reveal the unwavering spirit of resistance that burned within the hearts of African Americans. Despite facing unimaginable hardships, they expressed their longing for freedom, their demands for equality, and their unwavering faith in the power of education and citizenship.

### **Pleading for Emancipation**

One of the most pressing concerns expressed in these letters was the urgent plea for emancipation. African Americans implored Lincoln to issue an executive order abolishing slavery and granting them their long-denied liberty.

In a letter dated January 1, 1863, Frederick Douglass, a prominent abolitionist and former slave, wrote: "I do not hesitate to say that the colored people of this country would regard the Proclamation of Emancipation as the highest and most glorious act of the President's administration... and the greatest and most beneficent measure of statesmanship since the Declaration of Independence."

These letters not only conveyed the desperation of those living in bondage but also articulated a profound understanding of the moral imperative to end slavery. African Americans argued that their freedom was inextricably linked to the principles upon which the nation was founded.

## **Seeking Equality and Opportunity**

Beyond emancipation, African Americans also expressed their aspirations for full and equal citizenship. They demanded access to education, the right to vote, and the ability to acquire property and pursue their livelihoods without discrimination.

In a letter dated February 12, 1864, a group of African American soldiers wrote: "We have been fighting for our country and have proved ourselves worthy of its gratitude... We ask nothing more than the rights of citizens."

These letters challenged prevailing notions of racial inferiority and asserted the inherent worthiness and equality of African Americans. They demanded a society where their contributions would be valued and their humanity recognized.

## **Lincoln's Response**

President Lincoln's response to these letters was not always straightforward. While he expressed sympathy and admiration for the courage and resilience of African Americans, he also faced the immense political and military challenges of navigating a divided nation.

Nevertheless, Lincoln's proclamations, including the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, were influenced by the voices of African Americans. His decision to grant freedom to enslaved people and to allow African

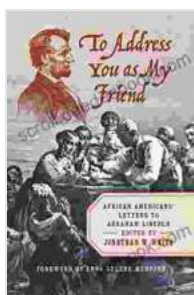
American soldiers to fight for the Union was a testament to the power of their petitions.

## A Legacy of Inspiration

The letters written by African Americans to Abraham Lincoln serve as a testament to the indomitable spirit of a marginalized people. They offer a poignant reminder of the struggles faced by those seeking freedom and equality.

Today, these letters continue to inspire and challenge us. They remind us of the importance of standing up for our values, fighting for justice, and embracing the power of empathy and understanding.

Reading the words of African Americans who wrote to Lincoln, we are confronted with the timeless questions of human rights and the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. May their voices continue to resonate, inspiring us to strive towards a future where all people are treated with dignity and respect.



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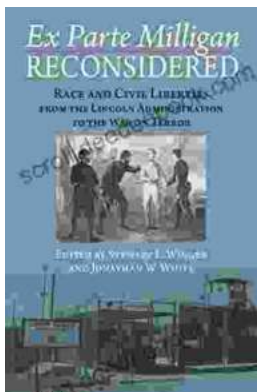
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