

Document A

Source: Speech given at the Republican State Convention, 1858.

If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot 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 divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.

Document B

Source: First Inaugural Address, 1861.

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that—I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.

Document C (* full text on back)

Source: Speech given at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1863.

It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Document D

Source: Second Inaugural Address, 1865.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, urgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish, and the war came...

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness 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 his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Gettysburg Address (1863)

At the end of the Battle of Gettysburg, more than 51,000 Confederate and Union soldiers were wounded, missing, or dead. Many of those who died were laid in makeshift graves along the battlefield. Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin commissioned David Wills, an attorney, to purchase land for a proper burial site for the deceased Union soldiers. Wills acquired 17 acres for the cemetery, which was planned and designed by landscape architect William Saunders.

The cemetery was dedicated on November 19, 1863. The main speaker for the event was Edward Everett, one of the nation's foremost orators. President Lincoln was also invited to speak "as Chief Executive of the nation, formally [to] set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks." At the ceremony, Everett spoke for more than 2 hours; Lincoln spoke for 2 minutes.

President Lincoln had given his brief speech a lot of thought. He saw meaning in the fact that the Union victory at Gettysburg coincided with the nation's birthday; but rather than focus on the specific battle in his remarks, he wanted to present a broad statement about the larger significance of the war. He invoked the Declaration of Independence, and its principles of liberty and equality, and he spoke of "a new birth of freedom" for the nation. In his brief address, he continued to reshape the aims of the war for the American people—transforming it from a war for Union to a war for Union and freedom. Although Lincoln expressed disappointment in the speech initially, it has come to be regarded as one of the most elegant and eloquent speeches in U.S. history.

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Gettysburg Address

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

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