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978-1-107-07303-6 - Rethinking American Emancipation: Legacies of Slavery and the Quest for Black Freedom

Edited by William A. Link and James J. Broomall

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## Rethinking American Emancipation

### *Legacies of Slavery and the Quest for Black Freedom*

On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation, an event that soon became a bold statement of presidential power, a dramatic shift in the rationale for fighting the Civil War, and a promise of future freedom for four million enslaved Americans. But the document marked only a beginning; freedom's future was anything but certain. Thereafter, the significance both of the Proclamation and of emancipation assumed new and diverse meanings, as African Americans explored freedom and the nation attempted to rebuild itself. Despite the sweeping power of Lincoln's Proclamation, struggle, rather than freedom, defined emancipation's broader legacy. The nine essays in this volume unpack the long history and varied meanings of the emancipation of American slaves. Together, the contributions argue that 1863 did not mark an end point or a mission accomplished in black freedom; rather, it initiated the beginning of an ongoing, contested process.

William A. Link is Richard J. Milbauer Professor of History at the University of Florida. His books include *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*; *Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*; *Atlanta, Cradle of the New South: Race and Remembering in the Civil War's Aftermath*; and *Southern Crucible: The Making of an American Region*.

James J. Broomall is Director of the George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War and Assistant Professor in the History Department at Shepherd University. A contributor to *Creating Citizenship in the Nineteenth-Century South*, Broomall's writings have also appeared in *A Companion to the U.S. Civil War*, in the *Journal of the Civil War Era*, and in *Civil War History*.

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# Rethinking American Emancipation

*Legacies of Slavery and the Quest  
for Black Freedom*

Edited by

**WILLIAM A. LINK**

*University of Florida*

**JAMES J. BROOMALL**

*Shepherd University*



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## Notes on the Editors and Contributors

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Are a Band of Brothers:’ Manhood and Community in Confederate Camps and Beyond,” in *Civil War History* (2014).

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**Yael A. Sternhell**, Assistant Professor of History and American Studies, Department of English and American Studies, Tel Aviv University. Her *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (2012) won the Francis B. Simkins Award from the Southern Historical Association and was a finalist for the Lincoln Prize. Her "Revisionism Reinvented? The Antiwar Turn in Civil War Scholarship" appeared in the June 2013 issue of the *Journal of the Civil War Era*.

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## Acknowledgments

Any writing endeavor is collaborative, but none more so than an edited collection. As such, in the course of assembling this volume, we incurred a number of debts. We appreciate the backing of the University of Florida, which provided funds to support an extraordinary conference in February 2013, held on the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Entitled “The Shadow of Slavery: Emancipation, Memory, and the Meaning of Freedom,” the conference drew scholars from around the country to think about new ways of reconsidering the understanding and impact of the destruction of slavery. A team of graduate students in the Richard J. Milbauer Program in Southern History helped to plan, organize, and realize the conference. We appreciate the efforts of this team, which included Angela Diaz, Allison Fredette, Chris Ruehlen, and Clay Cooper, all of whom have now finished their degrees and are beginning careers with bright futures. Ultimately, the conference created a forum that fostered the exchange of new ideas, insights, and perspectives on emancipation and its legacy, and first sparked our interest in crafting an essay collection.

A group of remarkable scholars underpin this volume. Each contributor generously devoted himself or herself to realizing the collection, often drafting and redrafting their work. We thank them for their dedication and collegiality, their participation and enthusiasm, all of which exemplifies what is best about our profession. It’s not always the case that an edited volume moves forward – and coheres intellectually – and we appreciate the privilege of working with all the authors. It was, in sum, an extremely gratifying and rewarding experience to work with such talented people.

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We are especially indebted to Debbie Gershenowitz of Cambridge University Press, who, from the beginning, embraced this project enthusiastically. Debbie has been instrumental in the evolution of this volume into a book, and we have relied on her advice and support. The editors of the *Cambridge Studies on the American South* series, David Moltke-Hansen and Mark Smith, have been great supporters and useful critics, and we appreciate their help. The project also greatly benefited from Cambridge's anonymous readers and their trenchant comments and astute reading; we are very grateful for their extraordinary efforts.

Collaborating with new colleagues and working with old friends has made this project worthwhile. But its conclusion causes pause for reflection. Throughout the course of this work we have relied heavily on the intellectual and emotional support of Susannah and Tish, whose examples inspire us. In them we find meaning and through them we find worth.

William A. Link  
James J. Broomall