**Lincoln Divided: Abraham Lincoln and the Fugitive Slave Law**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Public** | **Private** |
| **1854-55** | “I own, if I were called upon by a Marshal, to assist in catching a fugitive slave, I should suggest to him that others could run a great deal faster than I could.”  *--Speech at Bloomington, Sep. 12, 1854* | “I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down, and caught, and carried back to their stripes, and unrewarded toils, but I bite my lip and keep quiet.”  *--Letter to Joshua F. Speed, August 24, 1855* |
| **1858-59** | “I have had nothing to say in regard to the existing Fugitive Slave Law further than that I think it should have been framed so as to be free from some of the objections that pertain to it, without lessening its efficiency. And inasmuch as we are not now in an agitation in regard to an alteration or modification of that law, I would not be the man to introduce it as a new subject of agitation upon the general question of slavery.”  *--Debate at Freeport, August 27, 1858* | “It appears by the papers that the late Republican State convention of Ohio adopted a Platform, of which the following is one plank, ‘A repeal of the atrocious Fugitive Slave Law.’ ... I have no doubt that if that plank be even introduced into the next Republican National convention, it will explode it.... I enter upon no argument one way or the other; but I assure you the cause of Republicanism is hopeless in Illinois, if it be in any way made responsible for that plank. I hope you can, and will, contribute something to relieve us from it.”  *--Letter to Salmon P. Chase, June 9, 1859* |
| **1860-61** | “The question recurs, what will satisfy them? ... We must arrest and return their fugitive slaves with greedy pleasure. We must pull down our Free State Constitutions. The whole atmosphere must be disinfected of all taint of opposition to Slavery, before they will cease to believe that all their troubles proceed from us. “  *--Speech at New Haven, March 6, 1860* | “... on the territorial question---that is, the question of extending slavery under the national auspices,---I am inflexible .... As to fugitive slaves, District of Columbia, slave trade among the slave states, and whatever springs of necessity from the fact that the institution is amongst us, I care but little, so that what is done be comely, and not altogether outrageous.”  *--Letter to William Henry Seward, Feb. 1, 1861* |