

A SESQUICENTENNIAL MOMENT

JULY 6 - 12, 1862

On July 12, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln met at the White House with senators and delegates from slave-holding states along the Union and Confederate border to try to persuade them to abolish slavery within their districts.

“Our common country is in great peril, demanding the loftiest views and boldest action to bring a speedy relief,” the president told the men who were invited to the executive mansion.

To support his push for gradual emancipation, Lincoln suggested that there was plenty of cheap land in South America where former slaves could colonize. “And when numbers shall be large enough to be company and encouragement for one another,” the president

said, “the freed people will not be so reluctant to go.”

Lincoln also promised the men “a substantial pledge of pecuniary aid.”

While acknowledging that support for emancipation required tremendous courage, Lincoln said the country’s future depended upon it. “Once relieved, its form of government is saved to the world, its beloved history and cherished memories are vindicated, and its happy future fully assured and rendered inconceivably grand.”



This sesquicentennial moment is brought to you by the West Virginia Sesquicentennial Commission and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, Archives and History Section.

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