

“House Divided” Speech Fragment

ca. 1857–1858

Why, Kansas is neither the whole, nor a tithe of the real question. “A house divided against itself can not stand” I believe this government can not endure permanently, half slave, and half free – I expressed this belief a year ago; and subsequent developments have but confirmed me. 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 – Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and put it in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old, as well as new – Do you doubt it? Study the Dred Scott decision, and then see, how little, even now, remains to be done – That decision may be reduced to three points – The first is, that a negro can not be a citizen – That point is made in order to deprive the negro in every possible event, of the benefit of that provision of the U. S Constitution which declares that: “The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States” The second point is, that the U. S. Constitution protects slavery, as property, in all the U. S. territories, and that neither Congress, nor the peoples of the territories, nor any other power, can prohibit it, at any time prior to the formation of State Constitutions – This point is made, in order that the territories may safely be filled up with slaves, before the formation of State Constitutions, and thereby to embarrass the free state [sentiment, and enhance the chances of slave constitutions being adopted.]

[The third point decided is that the voluntary bringing of Dred Scott into Illinois by his master, and holding him here a long time as a slave, did not operate his emancipation – did not make him free.]

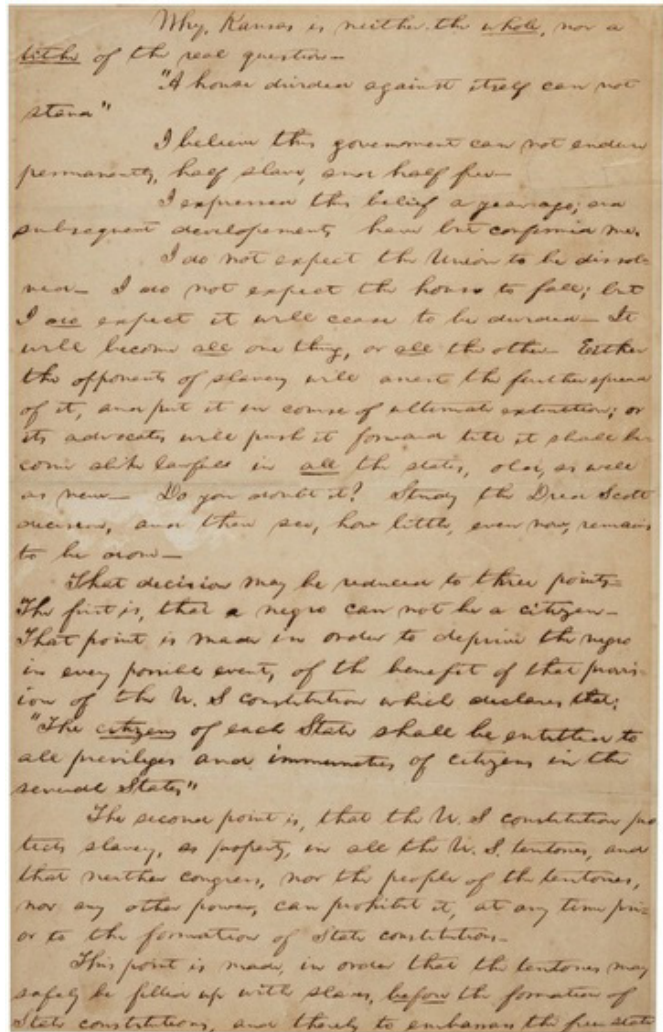


Image Source: Lincoln, Abraham, “House Divided Speech,” 1857 (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02533)

Transcript Source: Lincoln, Abraham, “House Divided Speech,” 1857



This primary source is referenced in *Warning Signs: Lincoln's Response to Rising Threats to Freedom, Justice and Democracy*, a project of Lincoln Presidential Foundation, generously supported by Iron Mountain.

lincolnpresidential.org