

Uneasy Partners: Lincoln and Frederick Douglass,
LBJ and Martin Luther King Jr.

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Codes:

CW = Christopher Wilson

JW = Juan Williams

JS = John Stauffer

P = Participant

“ “ =interrupting, pause

[] = not speaker's words

(Song) I have the freedom fever, ride, ride, and I remember how that feels, ride, ride.

There was a guy named Jim Leather.

CW = Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the National Museum of American History and thank you so much for coming out on such a rainy and cold night. My name is Christopher Wilson and I am Director of the Program in African American Culture here at the Museum. Tonight, as part of our Commemoration of the Bicentennial of President Abraham Lincoln which for us began with putting together an exhibition that is on the third floor of the Museum; *Abraham Lincoln an Extraordinary Life*, we're offering the first in a series of six conversations about issues that arose during the Lincoln Administration that continued to be challenges to Americans today. Abraham Lincoln's presidency remains crucially important to this day. The complex and momentous issues that Lincoln confronted as President have continued to be exceedingly important and relevant for the nation since his assassination. Indeed, part of Lincoln's Legacy is the passionate response countless Americans have to a man who

grappled with questions that still confront this nation; the nation that he lead through its most serious crisis. The bicentennial of Lincoln's birth is a fitting time to draw museum visitors into a conversation about issues that challenge modern Americans just as they did in the 19th century. Tonight's program is a perfect example of that long lasting relevance of those issues. Before we get into the program, I would like to put in a plug for our next in the series which will be four weeks from today on April 23rd. We are going to be focusing on: Lincoln, The Smithsonian, and Science, and particularly to Lincoln's relationship with the first Smithsonian Secretary, Joseph Henry, who became one of Lincoln's Chief Science advisors. This was an essential relationship during the Civil War during this period of multitude of inventions and designs that were presented to the government and needed to be evaluated. You see on the screen here Lincoln's patent model; Lincoln was the only President to hold a patent and this model is on display here in the Museum as part of the national collection. Lincoln was also held a lifelong interest in science and felt that research was essential to the nation. So, to that end, we have invited a panel of historians to look at this issue as well as President Obama's new Science Advisor who we have invited. He has not confirmed yet, but that would be a great addition to this program. That's going to be April 23rd. Let me also take the time to thank our sponsors for this program we are indebted to the Ford Motor Company Fund and the Richard Lounsbery Foundation for their support of the Lincoln exhibition. Also, to the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and the National Endowment for the Humanities for support of this lecture series. I would also like to dedicate tonight's program to Historian John Hope Franklin who died yesterday at the age of 94. Professor Franklin was a great friend to this institution and an inspiration to me personally and I imagine to many members of our audience and panel. Our program tonight focuses on arguably the most difficult issue tackled by the Lincoln Administration. Also, one of the most challenging for the nation today: issues of race, civil rights, emancipation and just who can be an American. In Lincoln's time and 100 years later, many parallel problems resulted in many ways in many ways parallel relationships between two Presidents and two legendary civil rights leaders. Abraham Lincoln and Fredrick Douglass and Lyndon Johnson and Martin Luther King needed one another while each having very separate callings that drew them in different directions. The partnerships that they developed are fascinating and important to the

understanding of the story of America. To start us out, I would like to share with you two objects in the Museum's collection. The first is this brass ink stand, which sat on the desk of Major Thomas Eckert in the War Department Telegraph Office during the Civil War. At this time, the War Department handled all the President's telegrams. Lincoln often stopped by to learn the latest news of the war. According to Eckert, the President composed an early draft of the Emancipation Proclamation while sitting at this desk in the summer of 1862. Civil rights activist Juanita Williams wore these shoes and in fact wore them down as you can see, when she and 25,000 protestors marched the 54 miles from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to demand equal voting rights for African Americans in March 1965. Each of these objects speaks to these relationships. The story of Lincoln working on the Emancipation Proclamation isn't as simple as the President writing alone in the War Department's Telegraph Office. When Lincoln was working on and thinking about emancipation he, although he hadn't yet met Douglass, he certainly would have been on the President's mind as Douglass was so famous and powerful. The demonstrations at Selma are often looked on as an example of King using activism and marches to force Johnson's hand on voting rights bill for which the President felt the time wasn't right but the relationship was more complex than that. The attack on the marchers on Bloody Sunday in Selma caught both the President and Dr. King by surprise and put them each in difficult positions.

Tonight we will explore these relationships with quite a distinguished panel. I would like to introduce them to you now and have them come up and take their seats. Nick Kotz is a Pulitzer Prize Winning Journalist and Historian. He is the author of five books including: *Judgment Days*, *Lyndon Baines Johnson*, *Martin Luther King and the Laws that Changed America*, which one won the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award and the Martin Luther King Social Justice Award. He's been a national correspondent for the *Washington Post* and a Washington Correspondent for the *Des Moines Register* and the *Minneapolis Tribune*. A graduate of Dartmouth College, he did graduate studies at the London School of Economics and has taught at American University and Duke University. Welcome Nick.

John Stauffer is Chair of the History of American Civilization and Professor at Harvard University. Among the leading scholars of the Civil War Era antislavery and interracial alliances, his most recent book is *Giants, The Parallel Lives of Fredrick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* last year. He wrote the *Blackhearts of Men Radical Abolitionists, and Transformation of Race*, a collective biography of black and white abolitionists that one four major awards. He has appeared on national radio and television shows, lectured widely through the United States and Europe and was a consultant for Filmmaker Gary Ross for a film on unionism and interracial alliances in Civil War Mississippi.

Our moderator tonight happy to welcome back to the Museum, Juan Williams. He is a senior correspondent for National Public Radio, and political analyst for the Fox News Channel. He is the author of several books including: *Eyes on the Prize – America’s Civil Rights Years 1954 to 1965*, the companion critically acclaimed television series on PBS, *Thurgood Marshal American Revolutionary* and *My Soul Looks Back in Wonder – Voices of the Civil Rights Experience.* Formally a White House Correspondent, editorial writer and columnist for the *Washington Post*, he has also won an Emmy for TV documentary writing and appears regularly on news programs. William brings insight, depth, and humor to a wide spectrum of ideas and issues.

JW = Chris, thank you. Good evening and Chris thank you very much. John and Nick thank you for joining us here at the Museum. John let me begin with a concept which is that looking at the pictures that we had overhead just a moment ago I thought about the power equation involved. That in both cases in looking at Presidents Lincoln and President Johnson, the power was in white hands and the key was you had blacks as advisors coming to the throne, so to speak, to offer a word of advice. It was up to the white man in the room as to whether or not that advice would be heeded. Today, it’s an interesting twist on that tale because the President is a black man. We have a different kind of equation that we couldn’t portray in the video. But this is a critical moment in American History where communication across racial lines is a critical importance given the demographics of the day. The fact is that there are fewer whites in the country today than ever. There are more people of color and, in specific, I think as surprise to anyone more Hispanics than there are blacks in the country.

JS = Right.

JW = So the whole notion of listening and the notion of finding common ground across racial lines seems to be to be more critical than ever and that's why I think Chris finds this event one that could be so illuminating for the audience. Let me start with you John by talking about where you see common ground between Lincoln and Douglass.

JS = I think there is common ground in a number of areas. I like how you prefaced it, Frederick Douglass would have agreed very much. In fact, his only known work of fiction called the *Heroic Slave* is essentially a handbook for interracial friendship. The key for the white is someone who can listen well. In fact the white protagonist is called Mr. Listwell because he can listen well to what blacks have to say. And that was one of the characteristics that Douglass saw in Lincoln. Douglass met Lincoln three times in the White House. He's the first black man to meet with an advisor (inaudible) President in terms of near equality and one of the things that first struck Douglass was the degree to which Lincoln listened well to what he had to say and took seriously his advice. They had before Douglass first met Lincoln in '63; they save to say that Douglass considered Lincoln an enemy. It wasn't until Lincoln passes the Emancipation Proclamation that they began to converge. In fact, the closest Fredrick Douglass ever came to emigrating to outside of the United States, he planned to move to Haiti as he had lost faith in the United States ever fulfilling its national ideals, was in the immediate wake of Lincoln's first inaugural. So they began when Lincoln took his first oath of office, they were really at odds because of Lincoln's conciliatory gestures to the confederacy to these newly formed confederate states. When Douglass first came to the White House, a meeting had not been scheduled. Douglass was already the equivalent of a rock star. He was a household name. He sent up his card and within two minutes, Lincoln brings him to the White House. Lincoln's capacity to listen well was one of the things that struck Douglass as I said. Another is that they had lived strikingly parallel lives.

JW = Well that's what I wanted to ask you about is that part of the capacity to listen it seems to me would come from a sense of respect for the other's intellect and capacity to hear.

JS = That's right.

JW = Right so you have to have that sort of simpatico. In this time, which is very different than the time I'm going to talk about with Nick, I can't imagine that they grew up in any similar way. We know that initially Douglass is a slave child.

JS = Right.

JW = You know obviously, as you writing your book, benefits from some kind hearted masters.

JS = Right.

JW = But Lincoln is growing up in a very different life. As you put it, Douglass has no formal education. Lincoln has some, not much, but some.

JS = Less than a year.

JW = Both are sort of made of their own metal, but both tremendously intellectual people.

JS = Right.

JW = So just briefly how do they come to understand the humanity and intellect of the other?

JS = One from the fact that they both rose up through learning how to use words as weapons as young boys and falling in love with language and understanding the power

of language and understanding that the importance of being great orators at a time in which oratory was one of the only forms of public entertainment.

JW = And they were both great orators.

JS = ...and they were both great orators. Douglass was actually considered a superior orator to Lincoln. In part, because Douglass was considered immensely handsome, very good looking, even his enemies acknowledged it. He had a rich baritone voice that was musical. So those were gifts that he didn't have a lot of control over. Lincoln, on the other hand, at 6'4", the three adjectives most used to characterize Lincoln were: ugly, awkward, and grotesque. Not an appealing visual presence on stage.

JW = And that was just his wife. I think the other thing that struck me about this though is Douglass had the advantage of listening to black ministers.

JS = That's right, that's right.

JW = As he was coming along.

JS = In fact he spent some time he preached. Douglass was a minister for a brief period.

JW = That's right.

JS = I think that's one important very important aspect. They also, I mean, despite the dramatic radical differences, they both grew up in pretty vicious communities. Douglass obviously a lot more vicious as a slave, but in Lincoln's backwoods communities of Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois the defining aspect of manhood was the capacity to fight hard and drink a lot. So Lincoln was seen as an anomaly in those communities as someone who fell in love with language. They both defined themselves...

JW = And, and...Douglass as you tell in the book would have to fight...

JS = Yes.

JW = ...fight white people.

JS = Exactly, in fact both men as young men defined that fight as a turning point in their young lives. Both had enormous respect for each other as “self-made men.” Now as “self-made men” it was a term that Henry Clay, who was Lincoln’s hero, he coined the term “self-made man” in 1832. “Self-made men” for them is very different than what most people think of it today. Most people think of “self-made men” as someone rising up from virtually nothing or little and becoming rich. For Douglass and Lincoln, “self-made men” and in Douglass “self-made women” as well was inseparable from social reform. So as you remade yourself, as you evolved, you also sought to reform society and eradicate the evils of your world.

JW = So how is it that they well I can see why Douglass would want the ear of Lincoln because Lincoln was the President.

JS = Right.

JW = You say that it only three times that they met and from Lincoln’s perspective Douglass is the rock star.

JS = Right.

JW = But why does he send the carriage and why does he agree to the meetings?

JS = He agrees to the meetings and he sends the carriage because Lincoln realizes (finally in Douglass’ view) that for him to achieve his chief aim, which is to win the war and preserve the union, he needs blacks on his side. That he cannot do it without the aide of African Americans.

JW = And Douglass is making the case that blacks be allowed to join the union force.

JS = To join the union force. As soon as the confederacy fires at Fort Sumter, Douglass' primary goal is to convince Lincoln and Republicans that the only way that they can win the war is to liberate the slaves and arm them. Because Douglass says until you liberate the slaves, they are aiding and abetting the confederacy. He famously said, "Slaves are the stomach of the rebellion. They are growing the food that feeds the confederates. They are building the roads. They are building the trenches. They are doing the confederacy's dirty work. If you emancipate them and bring them...and arm them they will then be aiding the"

JW = So that is the crux of why Lincoln wants to listen to Douglass?

JS = Exactly, exactly. So in a sense they ultimately considered each other friends, but their friendship was profoundly utilitarian. Douglass realized that he needed Lincoln on his side in order to achieve his chief aim which is to end slavery immediately and work toward racial equality. Lincoln recognizes that he needs Douglass on this side in order to achieve his chief aim which is winning the war and preserving the union. He understands that Douglass is essentially the ambassador of African Americans.

JW = All right. Nick, let's talk lets now shift a century forward. I mean, literally, it's a 100 years. And we come to quite a similar, it's astounding the parallels I think in these relationships to LBJ and Martin Luther King, Jr. Let me start as just as I had started with John by saying listening is key, and why was it that LBJ decides he's going to listen to this Baptist minister?

NK = As we were talking about what a good listener Lincoln was, to all appearances, LBJ wasn't a good listener. It's deceptive, but when you listen to these marvelous tape recordings of Johnson's telephone conversations including conversations with King, LBJ does most of the talking. And yet he managed to accumulate huge amounts of information from the people he listened to and the questions that he asked. LBJ and Martin Luther King were brought together by a crisis. The crisis was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, November of 1963. I don't think enough attention has been

given to just what a crisis this was for the nation. To begin with, in the opening hours even the opening days, the President, the CIA (the new President, the CIA) wondered what's going on here. We are in the midst of a very tense Cold War with Russia. So did the Soviet Union have something to do with this? Johnson instinctively and immediately realized that he needed a lot of friends real fast. What Johnson did in that first week; the number of people from different walks of life that he reached out to is amazing from business, from labor, from religion, from his own party, from the Republicans and very much the civil rights leaders.

JW = Including Dr. King?

NK = Including Dr. King. The President's first conversation with Dr. King; the assassination is the 22nd. On the 25th, he calls Dr. King and it is one of these recorded conversations. Anyone can get on their computer and go to the LBJ Library Web site and you can listen to these conversations. What becomes clear very quickly is that both Johnson and King sized up the situation exactly the same way. What they saw in the assassination of President Kennedy aside from the fact that it was a tragedy, a deep national tragedy, it presented a tremendous opportunity. Dr. King shed; he didn't have time to shed tears for John F. Kennedy. President Kennedy hadn't done much in the way of advancing what Dr. King and the civil rights agenda was. As you listen to this conversation, you see that King sees the fact that we are in a crisis; the fact that the nation is feeling great guilt about the assassination of its young leader. He sees this as an opportunity to get that stalled civil rights bill through Congress. That's the thing that is on his mind when he talks to the President. It is also the thing that is on President Johnson's mind. King says to the President, "Mr. President, I don't think there is anything you can do more to honor President Kennedy's message than to pass the Civil Rights Act". It is a day or two later Johnson goes before a joint session of Congress and this was the principle emphasis of that speech, aside from we have to pull together as a country.

JW = Now you said, by the way is it the 22nd or the 23rd?

NK = The assassination was the 22nd.

JW = You said that was the first time they spoke.

NK = No, that wasn't the first time they spoke that was the...

JW = After the assassination.

NK = Three days later was the first time they spoke.

JW = But when was the first time that these two men spoke to each other?

NK = They spoke to each other, I don't know about when Johnson was a Senator; they spoke with each other a number of times when Johnson was Vice President. His experience as Vice President was extraordinarily important to what happened after he became President. President Kennedy had to give Johnson something to do. He gave him the Space Program and he put him in charge of the Equal Opportunity Commission. Eisenhower had had something to look at civil rights and Kennedy carried that forward a little bit further and he put Johnson in charge of it. Johnson did not want to be in charge of it. Once he was, Johnson became an absolute tiger. Some of the wonderful things that I learned in doing this book was Johnson (always restless) thought the Kennedys were moving too slowly. They didn't know what they were doing. Johnson convinced Kennedy that the only way this issue was going to move forward was by instead of treating it as a legal issue, he had to treat it as a moral issue. When Kennedy, finally, a couple of months before he was killed, made it a moral issue he was following Johnson's advice.

JW = Was that advice that in any way had been communicated by Dr. King?

NK = Dr. King had trouble getting through to the Kennedys. The most important meeting and John F. Kennedy studiously avoided seeing Dr. King alone for a reason: if a President invited Dr. King to lunch or to dinner or to sit with him in the Oval Office, he

was immediately going to be besieged with hundreds, if not thousands, of letters of hate mail. You know saying pretty vicious things. Kennedy said of King when somebody was saying they needed to get together, he was saying, "you know having lunch with Dr. King is sort of akin to inviting Carl Marx to lunch". So there was he saw Dr. King only in groups of the other civil rights leaders, the other major leaders: Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Whitney Young of the Urban League, sometimes the young firebrands including John Lewis now a distinguished member of Congress. The one conversation that he had with King alone that I can recall was when they brought Dr. King to Washington; first an Assistant Attorney General, then Robert Kennedy the Attorney General, then John F. Kennedy the President. Each met with Dr. King to tell him that he had to stop palling around with one Stanley David Levinson. The ago of the story of King and Johnson is J. Edgar Hoover, he headed the FBI, who was spewing poison about King into the ear of Kennedy every chance he got and to Johnson almost every day. The Kennedys were listening and they were trying to persuade Dr. King that he had to break off the relationship with Levinson.

JW = So the one time that Kennedy meets with King...

NK = Alone.

JW = ...Kennedy is lecturing King.

NK = Precisely.

JW = But with Johnson there is much more of mutuality?

NK = With Johnson, starting from the day of the assassination, is a realization that they seriously need each other to achieve; Johnson to achieve his objective which was not only to bring the country together but for a whole host of reasons to pass this civil rights law. That was Dr. King's principle objective, so they had reasons to work together.

JW = Now Nick when you hear me talking with John about President Lincoln and Douglass do you see parallels there?

NK = Oh, I mean the parallels are awesome.

JS = Yes, they are.

NK = The parallels between what happened in 1865, well in 1863, and what happened in 1963. Then, the parallels of the second inauguration in 1865 where right after the inauguration, Douglass goes in and talks with...Lincoln calls him in for a visit and he tells him that was a mighty fine speech. Then exactly a hundred years later, give or take a few days, the nation is in crisis over Selma. The civil rights marchers, trying to protest for voting rights for African Americans in the South, were brutally beaten. The country is in a real crisis. Johnson talks to King and again he needs King and King needs him.

JW = You know when I remember that when Johnson goes on television to address the country (I believe he does it from Capitol Hill about this crisis) and the need for Civil Rights Legislation he uses the language of the civil rights movement. He says we shall overcome and King is brought to tears as he is watching this from Alabama; he is watching on TV and begins to cry.

NK = John Lewis told me (and undoubtedly told you and lots of reporters) that it is the only time that he only saw Dr. King shed tears. Dr. King was a lot of things, but he was a very cerebral but he had to be a very tough guy. There was a telephone conversation there, not recorded, and so we have to rely on a couple of people that were in the room. One version of it anyway is (this is after the We Shall Overcome speech) Dr. King says to the President, "Mr. President you have given us a second emancipation". Johnson replies to King and I think it's some of the language in the speech that "the hero is the American Negro who has brought this about."

JW = Now John when you listen to Nick talk a little bit about the 20th century relationship, do you see parallels in terms of what's going on in that 19th century relationship?

JS = Yeah from what Nick just said after Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, it makes it a law January 1, 1863. Douglass first of all celebrates it on December 31st in the Tremont Temple in Boston with a number of other blacks and whites. It's a full day of celebration when the news of the wire comes through that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation has been made official. There are tears; there is singing, mostly hymns (in fact Douglass starts a song of Gabriel's Trumpet on that kind millennialism tune) and soon after that, Douglass says that the Emancipation Proclamation should stand with the Declaration of Independence as the twin births of liberty. Douglass also says in his speech that the Emancipation Proclamation does not free the slaves in any of the border states. It frees the slaves of the rebels. But he says that with slavery free in Mississippi, there is no way it can last in Maryland or Kentucky or Missouri. Douglass also says that, first and foremost, slaves freed themselves. So he's not trying to hold up the Emancipation Proclamation as this mythic document. He is acknowledging its significance as a political document, but also acknowledging the importance of slaves freeing themselves. He places great tribute to Lincoln. He does that from '63 to essentially to the end of his life without mythologizing Lincoln. He says that he considers Lincoln the greatest President despite his flaws. Douglass and Lincoln never agreed politically. But Douglass was in my view a very shrewd political analyst, who understood the limitations not just of Lincoln but of any President. Douglass was always a radical. He always I mean the very fact that in his day he would advocate immediate emancipation and racial equality for all Americans, that's a revolutionary position. He understood as a President of The United States there is no way that anyone could advocate that. And so he understood the President needed to do what he could to approach that goal. In my view, one of Douglass' greatest speeches was in 1876 it was a speech to commemorate the Freedmen's Monument in Washington D.C. it was the anniversary of Lincoln's assassination. It was the unveiling of this Freedmen's Monument where Lincoln is standing over a kneeling slave with one hand over the slave and the other hand holding the Emancipation Proclamation. Douglass did not like the

monument. There was virtually, the entire heads of state were there: President Grant, Vice President, all of the Supreme Court, and Congress. Douglass begins his speech by saying Lincoln was the white man's President. He turns to the white dignitaries in the stands and says, "you are Lincoln's children. We are Lincoln's step-children." I could imagine these white dignitaries' jaws just dropping. Then, he embarks on his classic reversal by saying Lincoln as President did what he had to do. He understood that in order to achieve his aim of winning the war and preserving the union, which is what he took the oath of office to do, he had to emancipate slaves and bring them and arm them and bring them to the union side. So that ultimately, while we are his step-children, we become adopted into the national family. His understanding of that is his great accomplishment.

JW = Well now, Nick you wanted to jump in there.

NK = Just another parallel struck me between the two relationships. Very, very similar Fredrick Douglass in the case of President Lincoln, Martin Luther King in the case of President Johnson were always keeping their feet to the fire; were keeping the pressure on them to do more.

JS = Yes.

NK = In both cases, I think (certainly in Johnson's case) that pressure, and LBJ may not have liked it but he understood it, that pressure was absolutely essential if something was going to happen. Neither Douglass nor King flattered the President. They wanted something out of the President and when President Johnson did something that was helpful to civil rights, only then did King congratulate him. Abraham Lincoln was an extraordinarily complex man. Lyndon Johnson was so damn complicated that people who worked for him including a friend Sherwin Markmen in the audience, after working for him for the whole presidency, still shook their heads to understand him. One of the characteristics is Lyndon Johnson was very insecure and he was very needy of love. He never could get enough love from the civil rights leaders. It bothered him because he had done some extraordinary things with the '64 Civil Rights Act; '65 Civil Rights Act.

He wanted them to be all over praising him and they weren't running around praising him. They wanted more.

JW = Now one thing that I notice in reading these books is it strikes me that Lincoln by your account uses the N-word as rather dismissive of the intellect of blacks at times.

JS = He uses the N-word although most of the instances in which he used it, he was paraphrasing it but he does use it. He was a man of his time.

JW = And it would suggest that he had...well "a man of his time" let's put it that way. Thinking about LBJ coming from Texas, from the Deep South. To that extent if you will again someone who came from a very segregated society. In fact more in touch in some cases with Hispanic kids than he is with blacks and yet in both cases being forced into this relationship and this relationship that to my mind is so redolent of the slavery that attaches to the history of the American southern states. But in both cases you are saying they were able to overcome this.

NK = Johnson's use of the N-word; Johnson never had anything bad to say about King until they broke over the Vietnam War. Johnson used the N-word in conversations and stories. The most important time he used the N-word I think was Johnson's one of his very finest hours and that was during the '64 presidential campaign. President Johnson went in October, a month before the election, to New Orleans to give a speech to the state Democratic Committee. There were a 1,000 people in the audience. Johnson went in there. His approach to dealing with the South was not to sugar coat anything, but to say, "This needs to be the law. This is right. This is what we are going to do." In that speech in New Orleans, he told a story. The story was of an old former senator from Texas who had grown up in Mississippi. The former senator is talking to some people and he says to them, he's talking about what has happened to the Democratic Party in the South. He said, "I go and I listen to these speeches and before I die I want to hear one more good democratic speech and all I ever hear is nigger, nigger, nigger". Johnson said this to a 1,000 people in a hotel ballroom in New Orleans. Then he laced into them about why this has got to stop.

JW = Pretty powerful. By contrast though, you portray Lincoln as telling darkie jokes all the time.

JS = He did tell some darkie jokes although there is no evidence after 1862; beginning of 1863, there is no evidence of him using the N-word, which I think highlights the degree to which Lincoln evolved. And I think another powerful characterization of Lincoln's limitations is that for all but the last year and a half of his life, he advocated colonization of freed blacks. In other words, in Lincoln's vision it wasn't until mid to late '63 (and by some accounts you know even until the end of his life) Lincoln believing in colonization Lincoln had a hard time imagining American democracy in which blacks and whites lived together as citizens. He does abandon his colonization as a solution to ending slavery, which was widespread in the North. I think that gets at another parallel. Nick in your book you point out the degree to which LBJ and King were revolutionaries and they were you know the era was not only an era of crisis but by '68 a revolutionary era. In 1860 when Lincoln is first elected President, very few whites could imagine a nation in which blacks and whites lived together as citizens; only really radical abolitionists maybe 3% of the population 5% at most. By 1864 (four years later), the majority of whites in the North embraced immediate emancipation and large numbers would envision them as citizens. That's a massive social revolution. So this civil war brings about a social revolution. And Lincoln understands that he is part of it and he changes as well.

JW = And in fact what we are talking about here a 100 years later is another social revolution.

JS = Exactly.

NK = Absolutely.

JW = Now gentleman you know the one thing that jumps out at my mind is Booker T. Washington and his relationship with the White House. How does it differ? Let me start

with you John, how does it differ than what Booker T. Washington is doing? Because Booker T. Washington is famously invited into the White House and it causes a great deal of stir nationwide.

JS = Booker T. is the first African American to be invited to a formal state dinner at the White House by Teddy Roosevelt. First of all, Booker T. Washington (unlike Fredrick Douglass and unlike Martin Luther King) was not championing equality under the law, racial equality under the law; equality of opportunity for all Americans. For Booker T. to survive in the South during an era of massive lynching, he accepted a white over black hierarchy. So that's one crucial difference. Secondly, when TR invited him, when Teddy Roosevelt invited him to the White House, it was not to seek his advice. He was not listening to what Booker T. had to say. It was more of a formality. Nevertheless, he was excoriated; Roosevelt was excoriated by Southerners.

JW = Absolutely and if you think about it Nick, are there again parallels that you would see in a way that John would posit Booker T. Washington as not the rebel while certainly Douglass was the rebel? Who would play that role in the relationship of Johnson and King, if King is the rebel?

NK = Right. Well, all of the civil rights leaders had a common goal. But some of them went about it in a much milder, more traditional way than Dr. King. Roy Wilkins, the head of NAACP, was a great leader, as was Whitney Young. Neither of them, Dr. King was Mr. Outside. He was bringing pressure on the government from the streets. The NAACP did have demonstrations but essentially they were operating from the inside in the more traditional way of lobbying the government. So, Roy Wilkins' approach to LBJ was much more respectful, much more willing to give Johnson the benefit of the doubt, much less inclined to criticize him about anything, because Wilkins thought that was the way you would get things done. That was the traditional way. King's only weapon; well he had two weapons. One was his eloquence and there is a real parallel with Douglass.

JW = Yes a huge parallel

NK = His eloquence in not only inspiring black Americans to action, but his eloquence in inspiring northern whites to support this movement and to be decent. That was very, very important. But his primary means of moving the government and here you know we think of Dr. King as a great orator; which he certainly was. You don't unless you really get deeply into the subject, you don't hear much about Dr. King as being the very tough pragmatic, wily, leader strategist tactician politician because to keep this thing going, he had to get all of these fractious different groups within the movement to stick together and he had it. In the critical demonstrations: first in Montgomery in '55—'56, then in Birmingham in '63, then in Selma in '65 it was not easy to keep the people out in the streets. Thousands of people would get arrested. Just how tough he was in Birmingham when they ran out of adults willing to go to jail they went to the high schools. When they ran out of the high school students, they went to junior high and elementary school students. One of the most iconic pictures is of a young kid with a police dog snapping at his throat. Dr. King had a conversation with Bobby Kennedy; the Attorney General. Kennedy expressed horror that these young children were being pulled out of school and were being exposed to what was happening to him and Dr. King very coolly said to the Attorney General, "They have rights too". He needed them. His approach and the fruit that it bore by creating the two really most important crises that forced the government to act: Birmingham and then Selma. All came from his ability to create a dramatic confrontation with some violence which would reveal the Southern white authorities and the people who came out for what they were. That was the way he thought he could win the support of enough white people to get these laws passed.

JW = I wanted to give the audience an opportunity to stand up and ask some questions. But before I do let me just ask the two of you, where was the...if you think of this periods as parallels where is the Congress of the United States? Where is the rest of the leadership of the country?

JS = Great question. In Lincoln's day during the Civil War, I characterized Lincoln as a conservative Republican. There were particularly by '63 to '65 Republicans in Congress were increasingly very progressive. For example, the Congress (over Lincoln's veto) passes the Wade-Davis Bill. which is a bill that would sketch out or govern

reconstruction. Lincoln's plan at the time was a 10% plan meaning that if 10% of white southerners agreed or accepted or are willing to come back to the union then the states would come back to the union and The Wade-Davis Bill was much more rigorous. It required 50% of the voters and the states to approve of, to swear by the Constitution of the Union in order for that state to be admitted back into the union.

JW = These are all southern states?

JS = These are the...right...the southern states. So but Lincoln I mean Nick, correct me, but I think that one of the characteristics that I see between Lincoln and Johnson is they both had a very shrewd sense of the makeup of Congress (Johnson probably more so) and they both have a very savvy sense of public opinion and both sought to inspire the public rather than to be slaves to the public.

JW = And Nick.

NK = A contrast between Congress today and the Congress of 1963 to 1965, Congress today is far more polarized than it was then. To pass those civil rights laws, Johnson had to defeat filibusters in which 34 members of the Senate could stop anything and they stopped every civil rights bill for 75 years. He needed Republicans and the makeup of the Senate at that time, there were Republicans from the eastern states who were liberals to moderates.

JW = Jacob Javitz-type.

NK = Jacob Javitz is one of them, Case of New Jersey, Margaret Chase Smith of Maine. Without those Republicans they never could have broken the filibuster. Johnson exercised great skill in getting the Republican leader, Senator Evert Dirksen, to bring the Republicans along. Just one quick comment about the so-called Johnson treatment, Johnson is famous or infamous for the so-called treatment where he grabbed people by the lapels. Hubert Humphries said he would give you a nose inspection. He and Lincoln are both 6 foot 4 and he would grab someone by their lapels and Humphries thought

that he was looking down their nose. But the most important way that Johnson brought numbers along and brought Dirksen along was by appealing to their higher calling, by saying with Dirksen who was critical to breaking the filibusters for both bills. At one point, he could be funny about it. He said Dirksen, "Evert, when this is over he said there is going to be a statue on the ground so the Capitol, the Estate Capitol in Springfield. Beside Abraham Lincoln's statue there is going to be a statue of Evert Dirksen even if I have to build it myself." So he was building up, but he was appealing to Dirksen and other's sense of patriotism.

JW = Well it sounds like ego to me.

NK = And it worked.

JW = But it's telling that in both eras there is no black person, no person of color, I guess no women right? I guess there might have been women during the in the 20th century, but no women, no blacks certainly in your period right?

JS = Well Lincoln met with a number of black women.

JW = No, no in the Congress.

JS = No, no, no. In fact Lincoln would make jokes about women's rights, mocking it. You know, Lincoln understood, and Frederick Douglass who was in my view the foremost male feminist of his day, they both understood that for a politician to endorse women's rights was suicidal for being elected to especially the Presidency.

JW = But the larger point I was making was that you had Congresses in both cases where there is no voice coming from blacks.

NK = Well, not totally. In the Senate, the first African American to be elected to the Senate in the 20th century was Edward Brook in 1966. He got there just in time to help pass the third great civil rights law, the housing law. In the House, there were black

members and some of them held very important positions: Congressman Adam Clayton Powell was the Chairman of what was (in effect) the committee that was in charge of education and public welfare. Johnson's relationship with Powell was just absolutely hilarious. When Johnson called up Powell, Powell wanted something and Johnson wanted something. They did business with each other. But you're right I mean there were I would guess in that period there were no more than five black members of the House. There was ancient congressman from Chicago by the name of Dawson and he was a chairman of a committee. There was a fairly influential black congressman from California. They were a small handful compared to 45 to 50 today.

JW = Absolutely. I think its Clarence Mitchell of the NAACP who has viewed it as the 101st Senator, but he's up there as a voice outside again of a white council. If anybody in the audience had a question please stand up and I will try to repeat it so everyone can hear. Oh, here is a microphone.

P = Another parallel that crossed my mind might be the fact that both Martin Luther King and Frederick Douglass were so attractive to the Presidents because in some respects they were moderates weren't they on their issues? They were brilliant, but weren't there people who were radical abolitionists? Then, there were the Black Panthers, for example, by the 60's or other organizations or individuals who were so far (I don't want to say "out"), but so far beyond where Douglass and King were in some respects that they actually were made more attractive by the people who were more radical. In Douglass' era, they weren't just black.

JW = Let's see what the gentleman think.

JS = Thanks Teresa I think that's a great point. I think you are right that Frederick Douglass was a radical pragmatist. I characterize him as a prudent revolutionary. He, unlike King, he did endorse a violent means to end slavery, if necessary. But I think the context was different. Douglass understood that slavery itself constituted a state of war. In order to win the war and preserve the peace that violence might be necessary, although he was always advocating peace initially. Similar to the civil rights era, there

were people who were essentially the first generation of black nationalists, people like Martin Delaney, were seen as more of a threat in a certain degree and certainly more militant than Frederick Douglass. Now Douglass was a close friend of John Brown. John Brown tried to convince Douglass to go with him on Harper's Ferry on which he takes over the arsenal hoping to distribute arms to blacks and slaves and incite a massive slave insurrection that would lead to an immediate emancipation. It's one of the last sparks that leads to the Civil War. Douglass doesn't go because he, much as he loves Brown, realized that Brown is not a great military strategist. It's true in fact he says you know John you are in a steal trap you are going to die. So I think you are absolutely right that they were both pragmatic and prudent in their radicalism and there were people who were to the...

JW = But the heart of her question is not that. We all know about Martin Delaney and John Brown. But the question I think really is this, do you think that Lincoln was willing to do business with Douglass because of that or do you think those folks were so radical they really were extraneous to the central business and to the relationship?

JS = I think that Martin Delaney ended up meeting with Lincoln. Delaney had a profound shift. He begins to endorse the union when the Civil War breaks out. But Delaney doesn't meet with Lincoln until '65. Frederick Douglass is the first African American to meet with Lincoln, the first intelligent African American and someone of near equality. Then after that, Lincoln ended up meeting with more intelligent blacks than all previous Presidents combined.

JW = What do you mean...you mean like he was meeting with uneducated blacks?

JS = In other words servants; as opposed to servants.

JW = Okay. Nick what would you say is the case that Johnson is somehow forced to meet with King or decides King is someone I can deal with as opposed to dealing with you know more radical angry folks let's say a Malcolm X?

NK = The next gradation of being radical would be the young folks from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee called SNCC. They were more radical (tape goes quiet) last two years of his life. Suddenly, we had a war in Vietnam. The great goals of the great society in terms of dealing with education, poverty, housing became subordinated.

JW = But the early part of it were their first meeting and where they are having their intense relationship over the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. During that period, King is more of the moderate? or is that or does he see King, because initially when you were speaking you spoke of King as radical.

NK = Right, to begin with Johnson would have much rather dealt with the NAACP and the Urban League, but he realized that Dr. King was the man. He had to deal with Dr. King if he wanted to you know if he wanted cooperation with the person.

JW = Well did he deal with Dr. King out of fear of SNCC or Malcolm or anymore radical group?

NK = I don't think so and Johnson, and finally there was an absolutely wonderful when the pressure of Selma reached its zenith there was a sit-in some blacks came in as visitors, all of them from SNCC. They sat down on the floor.

JW = Where is this?

NK = This is in the White House. This is in the week following Bloody Sunday in Selma. There is a building crescendo of protest all over the country. So these six young SNCC people come in as visitors and they sit down. The situation is brought to Johnson, what to do and Johnson said well give them anything they want to drink but don't let them go to the bathroom. But eventually, eventually he brought them in to talk with him. He brought them in and among the people he brought in was Rap Brown, the toughest, most radical of the SNCC people. He just, Johnson thought he could persuade anyone if he could talk to them long enough.

JW = So how did that go?

NK = A couple of them, not Rap Brown, thought this was a trick.

JW = You know those wily white people.

NK = Well the way it finally ended, at the end of the day and again Johnson who was a micromanager in this respect gave well another kind of funny thing was he brought into his office some of his very top smart people: Bill Moyers, Harry McPherson, I forget who the other ones were. He says, "you know you guys are suppose to be the smartest people I have around, what are you going to do about these people sitting on the floor? Get them to come in and talk with me". They didn't want to come and talk with him. The whole thing sort of ended as a farce where Johnson orchestrated how they would quietly be led out by Secret Service or officers but two out that door, two out of this door, he didn't want a scene of them leaving the White House.

JW = Another question from the audience?

P = Thank you. I guess my question is maybe directed best to you Mr. Williams. Talking about as you opened up with sort of parallels of our current situation. It seems to me that President Obama is somewhat of a pragmatic radical himself. I was wondering, just in terms of certainly is economic agenda and the audacity as he says of his agenda, how would you see sort of the parallels between these other four individuals who also seem to fit that description, as well as the current situation from a political standpoint?

JW = Well I would not think of Obama as a radical. I would see him as someone who it's I have some tension in my mind about it because obviously what he has achieved is radical. It's the difference between, it seems to me, reinventing or reforming the society and one in which you would revolutionize the society. He is much more of the reformer. In terms of these four people that we are talking about, he often refers to President Lincoln as his inspiration. I think there are parallels there in terms of their sense of

wanting (and this come through in your work, John) very much wanting to accomplish what is possible at that time and looking for political opportunity and seeing himself willing to take steps. The question is how far is he willing to go, but willing to take steps to try to change the political mood of the country. To that extent I would agree with President Obama that President Lincoln as a perfect model for him. I don't think of President Obama in terms of President Johnson because President Johnson literally was a creature of politics and Washington and understood the ways of the Hill in the way that a freshman Senator did not. I think by contrast, President Obama is a shooting star. Hopefully one that remains in the firmament, but you know Johnson was here for years and Johnson knew the ways of Washington the way that I don't think Obama does.

NK = Juan, let's talk for a minute about Lincoln, Johnson, and Obama.

JS = I'd add in Douglass and Martin Luther King, because Obama has been deeply influenced and inspired by Frederick Douglass. Although, he typically has not acknowledged his debt to Douglass for reasons.

JW = I know.

JS = I mean primarily I think that Obama understands if he says I've been deeply influenced by Frederick Douglass. Enemies are going to quickly latch onto the fact that Douglass had been a close friend of John Brown's, say there you go again associating with another terrorist. But in *Audacity of Hope* he says, "from Frederick Douglass and other black abolitionists I learned that in certain circumstances power will concede nothing without a fight."

JW = Absolutely.

JS = He understands, like Frederick Douglass he understands, that the most effective way of fighting power is by using words as weapons.

NK = What I was getting at or trying to get at is moments in history. Lincoln was a great President. Johnson, despite Vietnam, was a great President because at a critical moment of crisis, they had the ability to lead, to mobilize, to move the country. It was true with Lincoln. It was true with Andrew Jackson at one point. It was certainly true with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The civil rights crisis was here whether Johnson, Kennedy wanted it or not. I think one could say we're at the point of another deep crisis today. Obama will be tested the same way these other people were. If he can somehow get us through this and come out well, that will be the test of whether he is a great President.

JW = Well we haven't come to that moment yet although people say we are on the precipice you know. But I would just finish off to the response of this by talking about Obama as contrasted to Douglass and King. Again I think in terms of a black experience in the country, Obama's experience stands apart obviously. Now if you think about Douglass' parentage I suppose as someone.

JS = I think in certain respects Obama is a direct successor of Frederick Douglass. Both, as you point out, both are children of one white one black parent, both in my view are among the great orders of their generation, both are among the great self-made men of their generation. Obama, even Obama's enemies acknowledge that, he's nothing if not handsome; similar to Frederick Douglass. Both are would have been very, very effective, what Frederick Douglass said was, "the understanding the true art can break down racial barriers." By that I mean Douglass would often speak before thousands of white audiences and in Douglass' day the majority of whites believed that blacks were subhuman. Yet, Douglass was such a brilliant and eloquent and magical orator and performer that he would go on stage and he would convince whites; he would convert whites to the cause of antislavery or abolitionism. So whites would essentially shed their racism to the degree they would acknowledge that blacks are humans and should be citizens of the United States. There are countless examples during the presidential campaign of whites, before hearing or experiencing Obama, saying, "I won't vote for a black man." Then they would listen to or hear or experience Obama and they were converted defective to the degree to which they voted for him. In my view part of the reason why the so-called Bradley Effect was nonevent had as much to do with Obama's

eloquence and brilliance as a performer and orator, an artist so to speak as with the economy.

JW = You know I think I see that a little differently.

JS = You do?

JW = I think I see Douglass from what I have read of Douglass' speeches as a first rate orator.

JS = Yes.

JW = I don't see that from Obama.

JS = You don't see Obama as a first rate orator?

JW = He is very good, he's good. As you said handsome and articulate, I think Joe Biden said this.

JS = Clean too.

JW = But you know for me I can't think of you know too many lines I was testing my mind as we sit here maybe the audience can help, of a great line that you would say, "oh that's Barack Obama's speech at the Inauguration" or you know. I don't see that at all. I think that he is a phenomenon in terms of his ability to speak out and to have people share his vision of what is possible. To have them believe in him and to believe in this larger picture of a changing America and one that is not going to discomfort or upset them. But I think he is many things to many people. I don't think anyone listening to Frederick Douglass would say, I wonder what he thinks about this slavery thing. No, I don't think he would have that problem.

JS = Yes, I mean I understand that. I guess I see Obama as an orator and as a performer as being as being really superb as being one of the great performers of his generation.

NK = Let's not leave Dr. King out.

JW = Now there is a great orator.

NK = He was...

JW = I can think of some lines from that guy.

JS = That's true, that's true.

JW = How much time do we have? Chris you were saying we have a time issue.

CW = No we are fine.

JW = Okay next question from the audience.

P = Hi. I guess in the scheme of things if you want to talk about great orators, what you have to say about Barack Obama is that he's truly able to communicate and is truly a secure...what he has that Lyndon Johnson didn't; Lyndon Johnson was engaging in his own redneck way. He was funny and kind of hapless, but Obama has to be put down, I think, as a great orator. I guess I want to take issue with you a little bit much as I rarely do that, otherwise.

JW = You should come to my home if you want to do that. Go right ahead.

P = He is so innately it is so internally secure and comfortable in his own skin that other people's criticism, other people's efforts to bait him or provoke him just are wasted because he is innately secure. He can laugh at himself and can admit fault and that kind of thing, which is a luxury that very few leaders in this country have ever had. He just

feels solid enough and real enough where I don't, I think with Johnson he was always trying to prove himself and always insecure. Knew the Kennedy's didn't like him and didn't want him and that he was just tolerated and that kind of thing. In that way, I guess comparing Obama and my question would be you know what does he actually even have to fight, in terms of the personal issues that Johnson or Kennedy brought as with the battles that they faced as Presidents? Obama aside from the Republicans trying to thwart him for purely political reasons, Obama doesn't really seem to have any personal challenges in the way that these other men did.

JW = I would disagree. So I will come to visit you. I think, I think if you, I think Obama much more along the lines of Lincoln as relatively inexperienced.

JS = Right.

JW = The argument would be you don't know what you're doing. Not Johnson, I don't think anyone would say Johnson was inexperienced. They would say he was manipulative, Machiavellian, and the like and overbearing. But for Obama it's this question of experience and I think that question is then exacerbated, if you will, by race. Which is to say, "oh you're black are you really up to this? Are you really of intellectual caliber to do this?" Then this plays into what we were talking about before with the great orator, Obama, I think lots of people will ascribe "oh blacks can give great speeches." You know I think the Republicans at one point were doing this during the campaign. You know he's a great...even Hilary Clinton did it at one point during the campaign, "he's a great speaker, but what about the substance?" So I think that would be the issue. I don't know if that was so much for President Lincoln.

JS = Lincoln was criticized; I mean Lincoln's enemies believed that Lincoln was not a great speaker partly because of his looks, partly because he had a high pitched voice, which didn't sit well with his 6'4" frame, partly because he was so self conscious of his gestures that some critics referred to him as a nutcracker. He would bend his knees at the wrong time. He would gesticulate. Whereas even Douglass' worst enemies, King's worst enemies would acknowledge that they were brilliant orators and performers.

NK = A word about Johnson, Johnson made three great speeches; at least three great speeches. The “We Shall Overcome Speech” that we’ve talked about; his first speech to the country after the assassination (which was very, very important because we needed someone to reassure and bring us together) and his civil rights speech at Howard University. Johnson was, when you were up close in person with Lyndon Johnson, which you are too young.

JW = I’m too young.

NK = You know which I was a reporter.

JW = I can imagine he was a Lincoln.

NK = The Lyndon Johnson who you encountered personally was an awesome fellow in kind of a way that Lincoln was. He was odd looking too.

JS = That’s right.

NK = Because he was so big. He was I think you could say ruggedly handsome. Johnson on television was a total disaster unlike Kennedy or Obama or others. He had no concept of, with these couple of exceptions, of how to use television successfully. So what you saw was this guy with the long ears and the long nose kind of peering out.

JW = But that was not the man you met face to face.

NK = That was not. People would come out of the Oval Office and talk about how impressive he was as a human being. He was President in the age of television and with those couple of exceptions; he did very poorly on television.

JW = Another question from the audience.

CW = Let me just follow up on something with John in speaking of oratory sort of verses substance as we were talking about a minute ago you know it seems to me in the 19th century with Douglass and Lincoln, to some degree, that oratory you know was substance in a way in that 19th Century that it wasn't even in the 20th Century with television or is today that it was almost a sport you write your book, John?

JS = I mean oratory was it was of deep substance so no one in the 19th Century would have said someone is a great orator but there is no substance there. The two were seen as going hand in hand. The average speech in the 19th Century in Douglass and Lincoln's time was two hours. So you think of the Gettysburg Address in which Edward Everett, you know, he gives this two hour oration and Lincoln gets up there. I mean the reason that we have this only one very blurry photograph, I mean Lincoln's two minutes speech, the photographer is just kind of getting this is going to be a two hour speech I've got all the time in the world. Suddenly, it's over. The initial, the most common initial reaction of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was shock because it was so short.

NK = And the second inaugural as well.

JS = And the second inaugural as well. It really...

JW = Joe Biden would have walked out on it.

JS = So it really was an age when I say that it was almost to being a movie star or a popular singer or professional athlete; it really was. That's the closest analogy. That's where I guess I see there is substance in every in Obama's speeches and every speech I've heard and I've heard almost all of them at least up until a month ago during the campaign. He either paraphrases or quotes Lincoln and you can find a lot worse people to quote. He paraphrases usually Frederick Douglass. King is in a lot of his speeches. So is JFK. I mean essentially in my view he understands the tradition of great oratory in American history and he is able to recall it in ways.

JW = To recall it or is he a good student?

JS = Good student in other words he's steeped himself in it.

JW = You're right.

NK = You are being outvoted one.

JW = I understand.

JS = The other thing I would say to your point is that Obama like Douglass and like Lincoln at least all three are immensely disciplined as politicians and as orators. The three of them are also intellectuals. They were very much intellectuals.

NK = Another question from the audience.

CW = We've got time for one or two more questions.

JW = Oh, there is one there but we won't forget you.

P = Good evening. I just have a quick question about Abraham Lincoln's evolution. We know that his push for the Emancipation Proclamation was tied to the Civil War situation, but I was wondering and we know that was you know incidental with the Civil War situation. My question is, is there any other evidence other than there not being a record of his use of the N-word that would suggest that he had truly evolved?

JS = Yes in 1864, his basic his primary platform in running for President was the 13th Amendment which abolishes slavery everywhere. In 1860 when he runs for President, his basic platform was simply prohibiting the spread of slavery with the goal toward ultimate extinction. In 1860, Lincoln's vision for when the ultimate extinction of slavery would occur was, as he says in his debates with Steven Douglass, not less than 100 years. So in 1860, Lincoln is envisioning the ideal into slavery is occurring not less than 1958.

Four years later, he is calling for the 13th Amendment which abolishes slavery everywhere in the United States.

JW = But to come to the heart of this question the suggestion is Lincoln really wasn't interested in emancipation; he's really interested in, and this is the suggestion in your book as well, he's really interested in defeating the South and making sure the country remains unified. But what you just said is no Lincoln early on was saying slavery had to end.

JS = Yes, Lincoln said he always hated slavery. The key to whether or not someone was an abolitionist is what's your strategy for ending it. Although Lincoln's chief aim was always winning the war and preserving the Union, the reason why Douglass and Lincoln converged is that they understood that their discreet different goals had converged. So that Lincoln understands that in order to win the war and preserve the Union, he has to emancipate slaves and he has to arm blacks and treat them as citizens. Otherwise, he can't win the war. Douglass understands that in order to emancipate slavery you have to win the war. So their different goals had converged.

JW = But what about this notion, is it right or wrong that Lincoln was not interested in freeing slaves?

JS = In and for its own sake.

JW = Yes.

JS = He was interested in emancipating slaves. I mean even in 1860 his goal was an ultimate extinction.

JW = Of slavery.

JS = Of slavery, but at that point it was very gradually. So it's to not uproot the social order. Lincoln understood that slavery was so such an entrenched institution, was so

rooted in American culture, that to end it immediately or to end it quickly it would be to create a social revolution. Which is essentially what happened and Lincoln was anything but a social revolutionary. He understood that with social revolution upon him that this in order to win the war this is what he was able to...

JW = Nick and to jumping this a 100 years forward. You think of the second Civil War, you think of Johnson dealing with riots in the street and with the potential of social destabilization of the country and of course he says famously, after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, "there goes the South for a generation", in terms of the vote for the Democrats. So again we see a parallel.

NK = There are parallels. Johnson; it wasn't that we were going to literally have a Civil War, but Johnson the civil rights movement was so effective, particularly when a Birmingham or a Selma spread all over the United States, that the President of the United States and the leaders of Congress seriously believed we were going to have anarchy if not revolution. There was the motive there of persevering the Union. But with Lyndon Johnson, when you listened to some of those telephone conversations and when you understand his whole background of growing up with a Populist father and grandfather who is state legislators fought the Ku Klux Klan. When you listen to that guy's voice or I listened to his voice and I think that Johnson in his gut wanted justice for black Americans and brown Americans. I think he felt it very deeply.

JS = As I think Lincoln did. Lincoln said on numerous occasions that he hated slavery as much as any abolitionist and there is little reason to doubt that. But as I said the question is what is your strategy for ending slavery?

JW = Okay last question.

P = First I would like to thank you being the mother of a senior in high school who is getting ready to go to college and who wants to be an historian. The Civil War period is his passion. So thank you this is like coming to Barnum and Bailey Circus for a 5-year-old for him.

JW = That's the way I feel trying to herd them.

P = My question is both of your books the anchor is the war between two titans, and we speak about Barack Obama President Obama you know and this glow. But my question is does a President need another titan to have historical prominent and changing from the past and being historians and looking in your crystal ball and becoming prognosticators for a minute. Who's on the horizon that could be his titan?

JS = That's a great question you know I've had that before, who's the equivalent of Obama's Lincoln you know? I'm going to turn it over to Juan.

JW = We'll let Nick have a shot. I'm glad to jump in but please go ahead.

NK = I wouldn't whether we are going to get a titan or not I don't know. When you listen to the debates of the civil rights, when you listen to the people who were the leaders in the 1860s who were dealing with this issue, when you look at the Senate of the 1960s with Dirksen and Humphrey and Javitz, we are short on titans. But the critical at critical moments of history when we needed bipartisanship, people have stepped forward and been important. Steven Douglass, Lincoln's arch enemy, when the crisis got tough enough he stepped forward to support the President. During after World War II, during the Cold War, we often here about a Senator Vandenberg of Michigan, a Republican, who stepped forward to be a partner with Truman. The first couple of votes we've had you know, two Republicans joining as we are dealing with this incredible crisis, I think there is going to be the need for leadership, someone in the opposition to become a titan and say "the country is at stake here." Someone who will form a partnership with him. Is that someone going to step forward? I don't know.

JW = Well in the terms that you are talking, Nick, I think that obvious someone is John McCain and it would be a matter of rivalry there and I believe even today, you heard Obama when he is talking about something saying even John McCain says you know.

NK = But McCain could be that person.

JW = Could be that person. But you know I thought and listening to your question that obviously what we are talking about here is racial issues. If someone emerges who acts not simply as an equal but as an antagonist and forces that person's hand. Now obviously if you are talking about black leadership in the country today if you look to the hill they are essentially neutered because essentially most of those people were Clinton supporters and most of them in terms of their constituency about the fact that black America is in a tizzy over Barack Obama. They don't have the luxury of saying you know what this President Obama is not moving quickly enough, he is not taking concrete steps to satisfy our agenda. They don't dare say those things. So they say the reason I say they don't dare say it because it would be at the risk of their political extinction in their home communities. They all want to get reelected. So to my mind, if I was to imagine this looking forward, I would look to the great issues of our day. On the racial front there is not greater issue than immigration. This is a populous, difficult issue. If you think back over the last few years I don't think there is anything any issue where you have had Republicans, a Republican President and Democrats controlling the House and the Senate, U.S. Chamber of Commerce. I could go on all on the same page. Yes we need immigration reform and yet such a backlash against it that it stopped it paralyzed. The Congress could not act, President, everybody else defeated. I think President Obama wants to emplace some kind of immigration reform. He's going to have to do it against tremendous opposition. It will come back to McCain who comes from a border state. Is there somebody, like McCain, who will rise up and possibly force, put fire to the President feet, force him to sort of compromise and make history?

NK = But there is another element here, Juan, and I thought it was going to happen. Somewhere when President Bush was trying to...President Bush was trying to do what he saw himself trying to do what Johnson did. To do a brave act where the base of his own party wasn't going to be with him. But the element that almost, I thought was going to happen didn't happen. There has to be a popular movement out there. Akin to the abolition movement, akin to the civil rights movement that will bring the issue to a crisis.

JW = Of immigration?

NK = Yes. It started to happen with a one day work stoppage a couple of years ago and you waited to see whether this was going to grow into a movement. It didn't but it could.

JW = It could. Well, let me just start or stop I should say or however you want to do it by thanking Nick Kotz and John Stauffer for being such wonderful historians and for being with us tonight. Now I believe it's the case and Chris you might help me that both of these learned men are going to take some time to sign books outside. Is that true?

JS = Sure, I would be happy to. We'd be happy to.

CW = Yes right outside in the lobby and I would like to thank all of you for joining us again and we'll have our authors out in the lobby in just a minute. Thank you again, Juan.

JS, NK, JW= Thank you.