

**Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois.**

**Abraham Lincoln, [March 17, 1865] (Speech to Indiana Regiment)**

Abraham Lincoln, Address to an Indiana Regiment<sup>1</sup>, [March 17, 1865]

Fellow Citizens. A few words only-- I was born in Kentucky, raised in Indiana, resided in Illinois, and now here, it is my duty to care equally for the good people of all the States. I am to-day see glad of seeing it in the power of an Indianana regiment to present this captured flag to the good governor of their State. And ~~you~~ yet I would not wish to compliment Indiana above other states, remembering that all have done so well. There are but few aspects of this great war on which I have not already expressed my views by speaking or writing-- There is one -- the recent effort of our erring brethren, sometimes so-called, to employ the slaves in their armies-- The great question with them has been; "will the negro fight for them?" They ought to know better than we; and, doubtless, do know better than we-- I may incidentally remark, however, that having, in my life, heard many arguments, -- or strings of words meant to pass for arguments, -- intended to show that this negro ought to be a slave, that if he shall now really fight to keep himself a slave, it will be a far better argument why should remain a slave than I have ever before heard-- He, perhaps, ought to be a slave, if he desires it ardently enough to fight for it-- Or, if one out of four will, for his own freedom, fight to keep the other three in slavery, he ought to be a slave for his selfish meanness-- I have always thought that all men should be free; but if any should be slaves it should be first those who desire it for themselves, and secondly those who desire it for others-- Whenever hear any one, ~~even a preacher~~, arguing for slavery I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally--

There is one thing about the negroes fighting for the rebels which we can know as well as they can; and that is that they can not, at same time fight in their armies, and stay at home and make bread for them-- And this being known and remembered we can have but little concern whether they become soldiers or not-- I am rather in favor of the measure; and would at any time if I could, have loaned them a vote to carry it-- We have to reach the bottom of the insurgent resources; and that they employ, or seriously think of employing, the slaves as soldiers, gives us glimpses of the bottom. Therefore I am glad of what we learn on this subject--

[Note 1 The regiment in question was the 140th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, which had captured a flag at Fort Anderson, North Carolina, and was presenting it to the governor of Indiana. For a somewhat different version of this address as it appeared in a newspaper, see *Collected Works*, VIII, 360-62.]

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