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Justice and Cruelty

...ance of justice, liberty, prosperity, ...e bequeathed by your fathers is ...t by me. . . . What, to the American ...th of July? I answer: a day that ...re than all other days in the year, ...and cruelty to which he is the

...glass, Independence Day speech ...d at Rochester, New York, 1852

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...northerners and south- ...major political parties. As ...r slavery, a new party

...y did the Lincoln- ...own's raid increase ...uth?

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...1854, many northern ...was called the Repub- ...o stop the spread of ...e Republicans' anti- ...Democrats and Free-

...a powerful force in ...1854 were held only ...f the 245 candidates ...ntatives, 105 were ...e races also cost the ...n state legislatures. ...n Party ran its first ...Frémont, the army ...pendence during ...blicans waged a ...e Democrat James ...11 of the nation's

...e election

The Dred Scott Decision

In March 1857—only three days after Buchanan took office—the U.S. Supreme Court delivered a shattering blow to antislavery forces. It decided the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford*.

Dred Scott was an enslaved person who had once been owned by a U.S. Army doctor. The doctor, and Scott, lived for a time in Illinois and in the Wisconsin Territory. Slavery was illegal in both places. After leaving the army, the doctor settled with Scott in Missouri.

With the help of antislavery lawyers, Scott sued for his freedom. He argued that he was free because he had lived where slavery was illegal. In time, the case reached the Supreme Court. Neither northerners nor southerners were prepared for what the Court decided.

The Court Decides Chief Justice **Roger B. Taney** wrote the decision for the Court. Scott was not a free man, he said, for two reasons. First, according to Taney, Scott had no right to sue in federal court because African Americans were not citizens. Second, Taney said, merely living in free territory did not make an enslaved person free. Slaves were property, Taney declared, and property rights were protected by the U.S. Constitution.

But the ruling went even further. Taney wrote that Congress did not have the power to prohibit slavery in any territory. Thus, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.

Reaction Supporters of slavery rejoiced at the Dred Scott decision. The decision meant that slavery was legal in all territories—just as white southern leaders had been demanding all along.

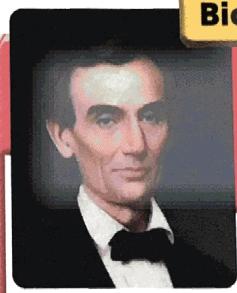
Northerners, however, were stunned. African American leaders such as Frederick Douglass condemned the ruling. Still, Douglass declared, “my hopes were never brighter than now.” He believed that outrage against the decision would bring more whites to the abolitionist cause.

Indeed, white northerners were also shocked by the ruling. Many had hoped that slavery would eventually die out if it were restricted to the South. Now, however, slavery could spread throughout the West.

One northerner who spoke out against the Dred Scott decision was an Illinois lawyer named **Abraham Lincoln**. The idea that African Americans could not be citizens, he said, was based on a false view of American history. In a very short time, Lincoln would become a central figure in the fight against the spread of slavery.

Checkpoint Why did Dred Scott claim he was no longer enslaved?

Biography Quest



Abraham Lincoln
1809–1865

Abraham Lincoln was not yet a nationally known figure in 1857. But he was well known in Illinois as a clever, successful lawyer and politician.

People liked Lincoln for his quick wit and down-to-earth approach. He was known as a good, straightforward speaker. Even so, a listener once complained that he could not understand a speech of Lincoln's. “There are always some fleas a dog can't reach,” was Lincoln's reply.

Biography Quest online

Why was Lincoln voted out of Congress after one term?

For: The answer to the question about Lincoln

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