



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

***America's New Birth of Freedom:
Documents from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library***

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Can slavery be justified?

Thomas F. Schwartz, Ph.D., Illinois State Historian: Lincoln dealt with the question of slavery throughout his life. His political opinion on how to handle the issue changed over time, but his personal opinion was consistent. He had no patience for those who thought that slavery represented the common good. He expresses it here clearly.

Lincoln: "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 I hear anyone arguing for slavery I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally.

"Speech to the One Hundred Fortieth Indiana Regiment," March 17, 1865, from *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* 8:361.

Video courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.