

Beyond Stephen Douglas
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I have to say that it is with some trepidation that I address you here tonight. Not only have there been some heated words over the controversy regarding the possible renaming of Douglas Hall here on your campus, but many of the basic arguments on the several sides of a multifaceted debate have already been so ably made. You have heard from nationally respected historians like Allen Guelzo, as well as from able faculty here on campus, especially Christopher Hanlon and Mark Voss-Hubbard, Michael Loudon and Martin Hardeman, Angela Vietto, Jan Marquardt, as well as from many students who I have read as I tried to follow the discussion online.

I like to tell my students that historians are like the fire department. We don't pursue history because we think we will arrive at the final word on a topic, and that disappoints many of my students. Certain points may be settled, say for instance, that slavery was not a benevolent institution designed with the best interests of slaves in mind, but rather a profit-driven exploitative labor system that daily entailed almost unspeakable horror and degradation. Nevertheless many points shift but never really settle and just when some points do seem to settle, other related debates immediately spring up. No one ever gets the last word. And if this is the case, why do we have to take this class?

And the answer is we have to study history. I mean we literally have to. As soon as we think we have tucked the past away safely in bed, a raging monster seems to awaken.

We literally have to study history because any claim we make in the present invariably rests on a view of the past. I mean ANY claim. Literally every proposal we make in the present is rooted in a view of the past. And if you stop and think about it, this is obvious. As Lincoln famously said, "If we could first know *where* we are, and *whither* we are tending, we could then better judge *what* to do, and *how* to do it." In the "House Divided" speech Lincoln went on to narrate a history of his recent past including things like the Kansas Nebraska Act and the Dred Scott decision, in order to present the case that Douglas's doctrine of *popular sovereignty*, the idea of letting each territory decide for itself whether it wanted to vote the institution of slavery up or down, was in fact a covert plot to nationalize the institution of slavery.

Much could be said about that, but I raise it here only to make the point that we *use* history all of the time. We use it to argue with one another about where we are and whither we are tending. History is of course about the past, but it is always also about the present, because the monster of the past NEVER goes to bed. And because we have to use history, we have to study it. We literally have to. All of us use history, consciously or unconsciously all of the time. Our perceptions of the past are fully a part of our sense of the present, part of who we are and how we react. Tonight I want to make the case for loving history, because the richer our sense of the past, the richer our ability to respond in the present. No kidding. The richer and more honest our understanding of the past that surrounds us, the better able we are to understand our present and to face our future together.

We don't study history because we plan to arrive at a final answer, but because in our present struggles we can only draw on our sense of the past, and thus we are always fighting about the meaning of the past. Because the present and the future are at stake, fires of controversy erupt over what to teach our kids, or how to remember Hiroshima, or what the Confederate flag really stands for, or what to name a dormitory. Academic historians, as opposed to op-ed writers, are the fire department. Opinion writers gain an audience by fanning the flames, or as the saying goes, giving the viewers "some red meat." Responsible academic history attempts to filter through the arguments and through the available evidence as responsibly as possible to arrive at as clear an assessment of the past as possible for present and future purposes. Hopefully if we can agree on some of the truths here, we can put out some of the flames.

Well I was just saying to my students that historians are like the fire department. Little did I know an alarm was about to ring when Chris Hanlon emailed me about the controversy here at Eastern. And so here I am, springing to action with all the self-importance of the fire department following an alarm. I want to thank Chris Hanlon, the EIU faculty, the students, and others interested for having me. It is a pleasure to be called to do what I have trained for, to help put out an historical flare up. Thanks for hearing me.

I thought I might begin by following Lincoln's example. I want to retrace the debate over the possible renaming of Douglas Hall as fairly as I can, so that we might discern where we are and whither we are tending. And then from there, with your indulgence, I would like to offer a few possibilities at the very end regarding what we should do and even how we might do it.

Let us begin with the buildings themselves. I say buildings plural because there is also Lincoln Hall and the two are presented as equals and as partners. That is very interesting. Some here, I have been told have made the argument that changing the name of Douglas Hall would amount to erasing the past, while others have pointed out that "the enshrinement of Douglas in the building's dedication was itself a revisionist maneuver typical of much 1950s response to the civil rights movement." Let me just note that those two positions are not mutually exclusive. They can both be true.

Situated as they are, the two buildings enshrine a particular vision of history. Now that may seem far-fetched, but to anyone who ever had to teach the causes of the Civil War, the point is obvious. In the mid-20th century there arose a school of interpreting the Civil War known as "revisionism." Now today's pundits often throw the word "revisionist" around, and they often have in mind what they perceive to be excessively left-wing or "politically correct" view of the past. But in this case the "revisionists" were a conservative bunch, particularly on matters of race. Revisionism is still with us in the scholarship of Michael Holt, by the way. And the central idea of revisionism is that the Civil War was a "needless war" brought on by a generation of "blundering politicians." Because most of the North was not abolitionist, and because many places like Illinois, did not even begin to give Blacks full civil or political rights, the North could not have been motivated by "concern for the Negro." Or so the logic ran. That does not actually follow. And I would like to note that both the Black Power tradition and the revisionist position share this basic logic. They both tend to dismiss slavery as a cause of the war. For revisionists "blundering politicians" had whipped up what we now call a "wedge issue" in order to give focus to an opposition party that had no real reason for being except to win elections and patronage jobs for its members. Behind revisionism lay the miserable disappointments of World War I as well as the new science of psychology. Avery Craven and James Randall saw war as a kind of psychotic episode, a mass

self-destructive delusion. Wars were never fought for profound reasons; they were the essence of irrationality. Literature students will recognize these same ideas in the lost generation literature and in books like *All Quiet on the Western Front*. We historians compulsively put everything into historical context, including other historians, and what I am saying is that revisionism was pretty typical post-WWI stuff.

Anyway, to make a long story short, revisionist historians liked Stephen A. Douglas quite a lot. For one thing, this was a period in American life when racism was perfectly respectable in American academic circles. Most schools had strict quotas limiting the number of Jewish students, for instance, and scientific racism and eugenics were perfectly respectable. Jim Crow was also in full force through the south while redlining confined African Americans to Ghettos in the North. In this Anglo-Saxon America, Catholic Americans were not American enough, certainly not American enough to be President, but also not American enough to join your club or to marry your daughter. What did this have to do with the Civil War? Well quite a lot, actually. When we view the past, we naturally attempt to understand it in ways similar to the ways we understand our present. For instance, because we believe in Newton's Laws and because we don't generally believe in magic, we tend not to accept Puritan explanations of the witch trials which assumed the actual possibility that those poor girls had been *verhexed*. Rather we look to psychology or to social psychology or to social conflict or somewhere else to understand the witch trials of the 1680's. This is inevitable. We cannot even pretend to believe the witnesses who claimed to be tormented by witches. I'm not trying to be politically correct here; I literally do not believe in magic. OK. Likewise here: Revisionists believed that wars did not make sense and that the goal of statesmanship was to avoid them. So they took that belief with them when they went to the past to explore the Civil War. They also took their own racism. In their view, no sensible white man would fight for the equality or freedom of a black man. Such foolish idealism was for madmen. Thus the abolitionists were fanatics and John Brown, rather than being a freedom fighter, was simply a murderous sociopath otherwise inexplicable. In all of this, revisionism gave academic respectability to a relatively conservative and pro-Southern view of the Civil War and its causes. Growing as it did, out of post-WWI disillusionment, this school of thought ran head on into the effects of the Second World War, especially reactions to the Holocaust and the subsequent Civil Rights movement.

What does this tell us about Lincoln and Douglas Hall? Quite a lot. I want to stress that revisionism was THE STANDARD TEXTBOOK VIEW at mid-20th Century prior to the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, and the white ethnic revivals. So the people who named these buildings drank these views with their mother's milk. And when they came to Stephen Douglas, they saw a man who had not pressed any "fanatical idealism" on the country, like those crazy, overly idealistic, reality impaired abolitionists.

Revisionists had a hard time with Lincoln however. They had to get creative with him. The real historical Lincoln never wavered on the full humanity of Black People and only wavered on national citizenship for Blacks for two years from 1858-61, and then only under withering race baiting from Douglas and the Democrats, particularly right here in Charleston Illinois. O.K.—let's stop here. Don't say anything. How many people here know why Booth shot Lincoln? Just raise your hands. The lingering effect of revisionism is that we do not know this, because the Revisionists gave us a Lincoln as much like Douglas as they possibly could. Lincoln was a "Liberal Statesman" which meant not that he was a new deal liberal Democrat, but that he did not impose his moral values on others, or so they wrote. Rather Lincoln passively followed the will of the people. This view of Lincoln as a passive instrument of the people and

therefore as a “liberal”—which is to say, a non-moralistic statesman; this view one can find in the writings of Democratic Party activist George Bancroft in the immediate aftermath of Lincoln’s death and as late as 1995 in David Donald’s *Lincoln*. This was the view of Lincoln’s opponents, it should be noted, and it prevailed at mid-20th century. In this view, Lincoln and Douglas were not only relative equals, they were essentially the same. In revisionist hands, real conflict within the North disappeared and the Civil War becomes almost exclusively to save the Union, not to free the union from the grip of an ominous slave power. We are of course left to wonder why there would have been riots here in Charleston in 1864 if there was such unanimity in the North. Since in this portrait the war was brought on almost exclusively by wild-eyed abolitionist fanatics and their politically motivated Republican allies, Lincoln and Douglas seem equally statesmanlike in their desire to avoid tragic moral conflict. For revisionists, both Lincoln and Douglas put Union, Democracy, and liberal democratic process ahead of substantive values like morality or equality. And that, for revisionists, was a good thing.

Now what’s my point with all of this? Well, I think good arguments can be made on both sides of this debate about renaming Douglas Hall. Honestly. I’m a little surprised by the temperature of some of the rhetoric because I honestly can see some good arguments on both sides of this decision. Good friends ought to be able to come down on different sides here. But if one opposes renaming Douglas Hall because in some sense it would contribute to an erasure of history, one has to at least acknowledge that the naming of Lincoln and Douglas Halls already represented an erasure. That naming itself erased the difference between Lincoln and Douglas, particularly on the issue of race. The debates were not stentorian contests between two equally heroic comic book heroes after the model of 1950’s high school documentaries. These men hated each other and hated what each other stood for. Neither would have liked a building that made them equals. But historians today are still struggling to rescue Lincoln’s real antislavery commitments from under the avalanche of the old revisionist scholarship. I am not arguing at this point that EIU should rename Douglas Hall. What I am saying is that we have a case of one revision being supplanted by a return to the orthodox position. A cynic might argue that what was good for the goose in 1951 is now perfectly good for the gander in 2010.

Since the Civil Rights movement and since Black Power, all of us, conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat no longer see reality the way revisionists at mid-century saw it. It’s like the witch trials after Sir Isaac Newton and the Enlightenment. We just can’t go back there and pretend we don’t know what we now know about the way the world works. It should thus not be surprising that three historians from across our political spectrum, Eric Foner from the left, James McPherson, perhaps in the center, and Allen Guelzo from the right each have unfavorable views of Douglas’s politics. For only slightly different reasons opposes historical revisionism of the kind built into the naming of the two buildings. From the left Foner hates Douglas because of his racism, while from the right Guelzo hates Douglas more because of his cynical denial of morality in public life. But it’s mostly just a matter of emphasis; as post-Civil Rights Movement intellectuals, almost all agree that racism IS immoral. So this should not be a contest about right versus left or about political correctness. Major voices on the Civil War period align themselves regardless of their basic political persuasion here. And I think you would find the same broad spectrum on the other side among those who likewise believe racism is wrong, but who fear the erasure of the past.

A comparative pipsqueak, such as myself, ought to be careful not to disagree with these giants. So for the record, I share their distaste for revisionist conclusions regarding the Civil War. Lincoln and Douglas

were not two great men of equal stature, tragically forced to argue against one another about tactics. Their disagreements were more profound than that. Charleston is a special place in all of this, because it was here in Charleston that Douglas finally pinned Lincoln on the issue of race. Lincoln was not the kind of racist Douglas was – not by a mile. Whatever you decide here at EIU, you should do so with the understanding that the current building names reflect a school of thought on the Civil War called revisionism. And revisionism sought to erase equality and especially racial equality both from Lincoln's record and from American memory. For more than half of the 20th Century, America was NOT about racial equality, neither in name nor in fact.

And I think you should do nothing that would endorse a neo-confederate view of the war. My students like to be cynical and say that history is written by the victors. In my experience the opposite is closer to the truth. Losers spend a tremendous amount of energy thinking and writing about the meaning of their loss while the victors naively move on their merry way, mistakenly thinking they can let the dead bury the dead. The history of the Civil War in the United States has been dominated by a southern, one-sidedly pro-confederate point of view. If it appears that your teachers are changing history, it is probably because they are fighting their way out from under this pro-Southern intellectual avalanche. You should join them in that struggle.

Let me give an example of why I think this is important. Something as common as the Gettysburg Address became effectively meaningless for revisionists. We could get into the text of the Gettysburg Address some other time, but without the stress on equality, which very clearly meant racial equality at the time, the Gettysburg Address becomes grey, sentimental mush. And I think both Black Power interpreters and revisionists miss its central point. To see the world in its true red blood color, we have to dispense with sentimentalizing Lincoln. Remember when George W. Bush pressed the argument that those who opposed the surge in Iraq were betraying the heroic sacrifices of the fallen and their families? That argument was brutally effective. Don't sentimentalize Lincoln. Lincoln at Gettysburg was driving a knife into the backs of the Copperhead movement. This war was for liberty and equality which now included Black men, and if you were unwilling to get on board and take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion, you were betraying the dead. The Gettysburg Address literally makes no sense from a revisionist perspective: it becomes a mass of vaguely noble sounding words disembodied from any violent political and moral struggle; literally bloodless; a heroic but empty Lincoln statue. Revisionism gave us a Lincoln in the image of Douglas. Whatever EIU decides, the revisionism built into the architecture here is no longer tenable, intellectually or morally. You may decide to keep the name; but you could not cling to the revisionism it was intended to instill if you wanted to. And I doubt any of us really wants to.

OK. So much for the buildings.

As you are aware, last March Dr. Hanlon proposed changing the name of Douglas Hall with one es to Douglass Hall with two eses. And I understand that changing it to commemorate Frederick Douglass with two eses is no longer part of the proposal. Since Dr. Hanlon concentrated most on the problems with commemorating Stephen A. Douglas rather than the attractiveness of Frederick Douglass, I'll stick with that as well. I understand that the facts regarding Stephen A. Douglas on race are not in dispute. Dr. Hanlon very ably summarized the way Douglas used race. Douglas did not quite build his career advocating the extension of slavery. Technically speaking, he opened territories to the possibility of

becoming slave states from which slavery had previously been excluded under the Missouri Compromise. Nevertheless, Hanlon correctly points to the deliberate and malicious race baiting that Douglas used to gin up the vote. 70% of Illinois voters voted to prohibit further Black settlement in Illinois in 1848 and Douglas knew it. As Professor Hanlon pointed out, in addition to being racist, the Kansas/Nebraska Act was a disastrous piece of statesmanship. And I take his point to be that not only was Stephen A. Douglas a vicious racist, he was also inept. Douglas had every reason to know that his Democratic Party could not defend the Nebraska Act in Illinois, and thus he knew that he was giving his opponents, long in the wilderness, a new lease on life. Nevertheless Douglas gambled everything for a railroad. What, Dr. Hanlon asks, is worth celebrating in that?

This is a devastating argument and a complete reversal of revisionism, one that neatly illustrates the way revolutions in historical thinking take place. Once we agree that Black Freedom WAS worth fighting for, our entire perspective changes; no longer do the Republicans appear inept; they in fact look rather good after a century and a half. Rather Douglas's audacity now appears entirely reckless. I mean that's really how it looks. I'm not just saying that to be politically correct. We historians, virtually all of us, now think the Kansas Nebraska Act was reckless. Douglas wanted to populate the west and to build a railroad, and if that railroad went over the backs of black people, so what! So frustrated was Douglas with the inability of Southern and Northern Democrats both nationally and here locally in Illinois to agree on a railroad routes, he figured that if he could only get them to agree to disagree on regional jealousies, they might then agree to get on with the real business of America, business. Moral issues like slavery were for women and abolitionists. Victorian Men handled matters of the head not of the heart. And railroads were what mattered to the thinking man. That's it. Douglas just did not give a damn if black women were sold into perpetual sexual bondage and their sons sold off to a lifetime in hard labor. He just did not care. All this is a matter of general agreement. But since we sometimes argue about abstractions, I just thought we should stop for a second to imagine the human cost of such a doctrine. We can do the DNA. It wasn't just Jefferson who fathered children in this way. It was standard operating procedure of Negro chattel slavery and Lincoln was well aware of it. Not only was slavery in America about market oriented exploitation of black labor, it was mass trafficking in coerced sex as well. And it was all perfectly legal. In this Victorian Age, nothing enraged Democrats like Douglas more than when Lincoln reminded them of where all the "mulattoes" came from. They certainly did not want their wives reminded. And again, this is not political correctness, we all know this. And all of this made Douglas look pretty bad, then AND now.

These might be good arguments for changing the name. Let me now move to the arguments against changing the name.

One argument is of the "slippery slope" variety. It has been argued that having removed Douglas from the pantheon, why not proceed to remove Jefferson's memory from the landscape? Indeed, why not? Jefferson's reputation is in free fall, as is the reputation of Andrew Jackson. I myself sometimes wonder why Jackson is still on the \$20, but then as a student of the Whigs, I may be biased. Nevertheless, neither Jefferson nor Jackson would survive press scrutiny and public outrage today. Why not eliminate them as well? And it's a good point. One of the postings on this controversy mentioned memorials to Nathan Bedford Forrest, founder of the KKK. Many of us would support removing him from places of Honor. But where would this stop?

I suppose mitigating circumstances might allow one to eliminate Douglas but not Jefferson. And Dr. Hanlon makes a good argument in pointing out that Jefferson's record was mixed in ways that Douglas's was not. Indeed, though a committed Whig and then a Republican, beginning in the mid-1850's Lincoln began to use Jefferson against Douglas precisely because Jefferson was a Democrat. To do this, Lincoln drew upon and emphasized the side of Jefferson that talked about human rights and human equality. There was no such side to Douglas.

It's a fair argument, but one has also to admit that it requires argument. If we are going to go back and test our past heroes by our own oh-so-exalted moral standards, then we have a lot of work to do on both sides of the issue at thousands of historic sites. And of course this presumes we now have achieved some pinnacle of moral clarity – which sensible people might doubt. One person commented that getting rid of Douglas resembled the practice employed by ancient Pharaohs of scratching out the cartouches from monuments in an attempt to erase a subsequently discredited regime. After 7000 years, the erasure of Queen Hatshepsut from her temple, probably because she was a woman, seems less excusable. Old monuments are themselves a part of the historical record. Douglas Hall may not say much about Douglas, it tells us something about America in the 1950's, and that's worth something.

I randomly picked up a book a few years back, entitled *The Black Hawk War of 1832*. I know embarrassingly little about the war, and as a scholar I need to know a lot more. But that's not why I bring it up. I bring it up because as I read it, I realized that I have ridden my bicycle over most of the territory and places described in the book. I grew up in Wisconsin and as a kid my family took long bicycle trips through the southwestern part of the state. My sister eventually settled in Blue Mounds Wisconsin so from there I biked on the weekends for decades as an adult. I am intimately familiar with the landscape. The book, which I recommend, tells the story, not merely of white people crushing Indians, but rather a complex tale that involved Indian rivalries and jealousies as well as conflicts between British, Canadian, and U.S. Americans as well as within each of those groups. It is a very rich tale. It's not just eco-friendly Indians versus rapacious and evil white men. It's not *Legends of the Fall* or *Dances with Wolves*. Not only did I grow up biking around Blue Mounds, but I grew up in Northern Wisconsin, about an hour from the Menominee and Stockbridge Indian Reservations. We played Shawano Indians in football. And yet I knew next to nothing about the particular history of those tribes either. When I read this book, I learned for the first time that the Menominee were among the most persistently resistant tribes, and that they eagerly sought a pan-Indian alliance against the Anglo-Americans. Not all tribes had the same interests and attitudes, which is an important part of the story. For the first time I realized that U.S. Indian relations were really a part of U.S. foreign policy and that the tribes behaved like nations with and against one another as well. This made Native Americans seem so much more real than either the old stereotypes of Indian Savages or the modern left-wing stereotypes of Native Americans as Edenic nature people. It also helped me understand the outcome of a football game in 1980. What did I as a high school football player know about why this team of underdogs fought so hard, or what a victory might mean for them? Silly me, I thought we were playing a game

Here is my point. I was familiar with the places, and I was familiar even with some of the tribes, but I had NO idea of the history that had gone on there. That history had been erased. I am not saying that we need to study Native American history to be politically correct. On the contrary, Native American history is an absolutely essential part of our history. We have robbed ourselves of this history. And why does this matter? Because again, our understanding of the past limits of our ability to face the present. For

instance we literally do not understand who we are because we have told ourselves certain misleading stories about ourselves, both from the right and the left of the political spectrum. We do not know how Americans have fought in our wars because we only remember some of them, for instance. Our foreign policy history usually does not deal with Native American removal. The wars we celebrate do not include the Indian wars and only rarely include the Mexican War or Philippine annexation. This by the way is also a great disservice to those who served. Failing to see ourselves completely, we fail to understand how others see us – with disastrous consequences, most recently in Iraq. Not only do we not know who we are, we do not even know where we are. I had run up Blue Mound a thousand times, usually with my sister's dog. But I had no idea that it was a site of tremendous spiritual, military, and historical significance and therewith, an important clue to just who we are. I did not know where I was. I have only now begun to explore this meaning and I need to know more, not just as a scholar, but as a human being and a resident of this region.

But we have erased this history. We have depopulated the past and depopulated our landscape. We name subdivisions after imaginary place names in imaginary Jane Austin novels. Arlington Heights, Hawthorne Hills, Heather Ridge. Why? Because we have laid the landscape barren of any meaning whatsoever. Meaningless names literally go with this meaningless territory. And so as an historian, I do fear an erasure of history. I fear a society with Alzheimer's, as belligerent as it is uncomprehending.

If the proposal is to change the name of Douglas Hall and do nothing else, I have to admit I would rather see the name stay, if only as a kind of architectural palimpsest, a clue to some future student of an erased past which might yet be restored. One of the postings noted that "Douglas Hall" tells us something about the 1950's. Removing the name might be something like removing the fins from a 1958 Cadillac because we are no longer so optimistic about space travel. Current preoccupations with "diversity" are no more exempt from historical change than revisionism was. We must mark well: our work will also be subject to annihilation. So I do fear the further erasure of the past. As an historian, these half erased pieces of the past are how I make sense of my landscape. Without them, I cannot navigate.

Having reviewed arguments on both sides, allow me now to make some recommendations. Beyond that fact that slavery was a highly profitable capitalist enterprise and that it also included a highly profitable sex traffic which not incidentally resulted in an increase in the "stock" of human labor, I would have to say that the most important part of Civil War history that has generally been forgotten has been the role of Northern Racism in the coming of the Civil War. Again, I do not say any of this to be politically correct. Rather the Civil War and Reconstruction make no sense without it. Many, perhaps most of my students come to class with the idea that the Civil War was a case of relatively Black friendly white northerners fighting for oppressed southern blacks. They tell me, and I believe them, that this is generally what they thought the Civil War was about. But as the revisionists long ago pointed out, the overwhelming majority of northern whites—in Illinois, quite precisely 70%—were racist. Rarely do we get to put a precise number on something like that. But anyway, one cannot begin to understand Lincoln's tragedy without this essential information, nor can one begin to understand the tragedy of the war and the tragedy of Reconstruction. Without Northern racism, Lincoln's politics make no sense. But when you realize that he had to get 21% of the electorate who voted to exclude Black people to now vote for him, suddenly Lincoln makes a lot more sense. Likewise with the course of the war, when one realizes the huge backlash against the Emancipation Proclamation, both on constitutional grounds and especially the grounds that the vast majority of northern whites were uncomfortable with the prospect of living with

Black people, suddenly, the politics of the Emancipation process make a lot more sense. Finally, and most crucially, only if one understands the depths of northern racism, does the outcome of the Civil War make any sense. Grant simply could not muster Northern will to enforce Black freedom in the South, though he tried mightily. Knowing Northern racism prior to and during the war, is not about political correctness, it is essential to understanding the abandonment of southern Blacks into the hands of the KKK after the war.

Increasingly, American historians are realizing that the Civil War did not end with a noble settlement at Appomattox Court House; you know, where Grant lets the Southern soldiers keep their weapons and their horses. Ending the Civil War at Appomattox Court House is like ending the recent war in Iraq with the "Mission Accomplished" speech aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln. The war went on. Both wars actually, but I mean the Civil War. The South, meaning here the white South, did indeed rise again. With the Ku Klux Klan, a terrorist organization arose to lynch thousands of African Americans in order to terrorize the rest into silence. The Klan successfully preserved white supremacy in the South. In the American Civil War, the terrorists won! Let me say that again: we let the terrorists win. But we are seldom honest about that. Prompted in part by the experience of the Iraq war, Civil War historians have begun to look again at things like "rules of engagement," "counter-insurgency" and "guerrilla warfare" in the Civil War. Just what combination of carrots and sticks brought the South to accept the national authority once again? With a North unwilling to maintain the huge troop levels that would have been required, and unwilling simply to arm the former slaves en masse, the Klan and much of the white South simply waited the Union out, just as the Taliban hope now to wait the U.S. out. We eventually enticed the South with one very big carrot indeed, so-called Home Rule.

I'm not sure what foreign policy lessons we want to take from this, but clearly this is a very different past than the one we were taught by the revisionists. It is essential that we remember the past as fully and as accurately as possible. The name Stephen A. Douglas is central to this all-important part of our story. Stephen A. Douglas was part of a broad racist pattern of thinking rooted deep in the core of the Democratic Party, so deeply rooted it is fair to say that the very ESSENCE of the 19th century Democratic Party from Jefferson to Jackson to Douglas to Seymour to Tilden was racist demagoguery in the name of slavery and Indian Removal. This is what "opportunity" for poor white folks meant. As the problem goes much deeper than Douglas, getting rid of Douglas seems besides the point at best, and a lost opportunity for engaging the past honestly at worst. Here is a little lesson: it was not the so-called party of the elite that was hell-bent on Indian Removal and the expansion of slavery and therefore a war of aggression against Mexico. All of the Whigs in Congress voted against the war. No. It was the party of the people, sustained by racism and worked up into frenzy by local people like Usher Linder at the front of a terrorist mob. It is impossible to follow Howard Zinn and try to blame this on some "elite." It was the demos, the overwhelming mass of white Americans for whom Douglas was their champion. And remembering this terrorism is essential to remembering the heroism of abolitionists, Republicans, of many, many African Americans, and yes, of Lincoln.

Leave the Name Douglas Hall or change it, but use this occasion to increase awareness of the importance of Northern Racism in understanding Civil War period history, as well as the way anyone who wished to swim against this overwhelming tide of "negrophobia" as they called it, had to struggle mightily indeed. Of course many of those who so struggled were black; many it turns out were white. So again, it's not about political correctness. Lincoln's heroic but failed struggle here at Charleston is entirely lost without

an appreciation of the prevalence of Northern racism. Lost also is what Lincoln died for. So this is not about making white people feel bad. It's also not about making Black people feel good about themselves and it is not about making black people feel good about white people. It's about knowing who we are and what our struggles have been like.

Thus I would propose 3 things aimed at enriching our encounter with the past of precisely this place:

1. A plaque like those of the Looking for Lincoln variety explaining Lincoln's and Douglas's relative positions on race, as well as the way that Charleston was precisely the place where Douglas forced Lincoln to backpedal, temporarily -- as it turned out -- on the issue of national citizenship for Blacks. As a politician, Lincoln had no choice but to accept the overwhelming will of the people in denying full political and civil equality to Blacks. But as a lawyer, politician, and even personally, Lincoln had always been careful to uphold Black citizenship. Indeed as James Oakes has recently showed, Lincoln had the simple but significant words engraved on the headstone of his African American valet whom he ordered be buried at Arlington: "Walter Johnson, Citizen." But earlier, here in Charleston, trapped by Douglas and the Democrats, Lincoln apparently felt he had little choice but to pander further to the Northern racism engulfing him. This was a tragedy for Lincoln personally. More importantly, it was a tragedy for African Americans and for the nation as a whole. Douglas and the Democrats deprived Lincoln and the Republicans of any antiracist mandate. And this tremendous tragedy unfolded right here in Charleston. This particular place has special meaning not just in terms of Douglas's personal depravity, but in terms of Lincoln's tragedy and our national tragedy as well. I would be prepared to help with the text if asked. (Or see James Oakes, "Natural Rights, Citizenship Rights, States' Rights, and Black Rights: Another Look Lincoln and Race," in Eric Foner ed., *Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008.)

2. The erection of a monument or an exhibit dedicated to Jane Bryant with an explanation of the Matson Case, which also occurred in Charleston. A play could be staged. The drama seems made for a "Law and Order" style didactic drama. (See Mark Steiner, *An Honest Calling: The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln*, ch. 5 "In the matter of Jane, a women of color," Northern Illinois University Press: Dekalb, 2006) The case is a complex one. Most students remain unaware of the existence of slavery in border states like Illinois, and of just how vicious the black laws were. This is an important part of the story and Charleston is precisely the place to tell them. On the other hand, there are important ironies in these stories and it is not clear that even the abolitionists involved made the best choices in hindsight. Irony, it seems to me, is precisely what gets lost in the purging of history.

Jane Bryant and her children were the slaves in question in the so-called "Matson Case," in which, many of you will know, Lincoln was counsel for Matson in an action of recovery of Jane. Jane had sought refuge with local abolitionists Matt Ashmore and Hiram Rutherford who sought the counsel of local Charleston lawyer Orlando B. Ficklin. This case would help raise the issue and role of Northern racism, but not in some simple sense. It would also be a chance to celebrate the role of Bryant, her husband Anthony, Ashmore, Rutherford, and Ficklin. But be careful; there are ironies. The antislavery activists, both Black and White were also colonizationists and while the trial ended in Jane Bryant gaining her freedom and the freedom of her children, the Bryant family eventually emigrated to Liberia, where things apparently did not go well at all. So a play about the Matson case would not present easy, feel-good history for anyone, black or white, and it would force all of us to deal with some of the ironies of

American history. You might consider renaming Douglas Hall “Jane Bryant” Hall, and this would have several obvious advantages. But it would be unfortunate if Bryant were set up as opposed to Lincoln, which would imply that Lincoln was the racist savage of Lerone Bennett’s imagination.

3. Finally, I would also propose recognition of The Charleston Riot of March 28, 1864. One cannot understand the Civil War, Lincoln, Douglas, Reconstruction or much else if one does not understand the depth of racism in Illinois, not at the top with people like Douglas, but in the demos through and through. That's the ugly truth that alone by contrast makes any beauty here visible. Indeed the beauty in Lincoln is entirely lost without this terrible backstory. We tend to wrap the Civil War and Lincoln in a aura of inevitability about the triumph of goodness. The copperhead riots reveal that a past torn by conflict. Contrary to our heroic images, Lincoln was not very popular in the spring and summer of 1864, not here in Charleston. Slavery very nearly survived the Civil War.

By increasing understanding of these three important Civil War era events, hopefully you who live and study here can come to a richer understanding of who we have been, where we are, and whither we are really tending in our common life here as Americans. Without this understanding, I’m afraid we won’t be able to come to terms with the past or with each other in the future.