The District Emancipation Act and Its Effects on Washington, DC during the Civil War
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Background
- Compensated emancipation affected public opinion on three aspects:
  - President Lincoln, African Americans, and Emancipation
  - Bill first started in Delaware with the help of Congressman George P. Fisher.
  - Debated and failed, so Lincoln took it to DC.
  - District Emancipation Act passed on April 16, 1862.
- Three Parts: 1. Immediate Emancipation
  2. Compensation for loyal slaveholders
  3. Colonization of African Americans

Purpose & Hypotheses
Lincoln & Emancipation
- Part of his Border State plan
- Always wanted it to be compensated, gradual, and to include colonization in South America and Africa.
- Did not believe whites and blacks could coexist peacefully.

Three Main Questions:
1. Did compensated emancipation increase the public support of Emancipation in DC and in general?
2. Were the public’s opinion of African Americans positively affected by the District Emancipation Act?
3. What type of freedom did African Americans get from this Emancipation Act?

Petitions: The District Emancipation Act
- Emancipated all slaves in DC on April 16, 1962.
- Persons filed petitions to receive compensation for their slaves under this Act.
  - Described slaves physical appearance and abilities.
- Assessed by committee of 3.
  - Colonization
    - $100,000 appropriate
    - $100 per person
- Compensation
  - $1 million appropriated
  - $300 per slave
  - 966 petitions filed, 36 rejected
  - 3,100 freed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Petition No. 228 Gustavus Walters</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date Filed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Place</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Slaves</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highest</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lowest</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Valued at</strong></td>
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Petitions: The Supplemental Act
- Passed on July 12, 1862
- An extension of the District Emancipation Act allowed slaves to file for their own freedom with consent of owner
- Created to combat the smuggling of slaves out of DC
- African American testimony held equal weight to whites
- Only granted certificates
- 161 petitions, 22 rejected

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<tr>
<th>Petition of Margaret Vaughan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Filed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Place</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Witnesses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Certificate of freedom?</strong></td>
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Opinions & Outcomes: African Americans
- Split support on colonization.
- Differing opinions on the abilities of contrabands
  - Separate relief organizations set up to help acclimate slaves to freedom.
- Believed emancipation meant freedom and citizenship.
  - The Act provided for freedom from bondage and equality under the law.
  - Act only granted freedom to those in DC.
  - Fugitive slave law enforced until late 1864
- Both races strove to maintain status quo.
  - Natural differences in the races
  - Societal norms/natural law cannot be altered by Congress, and Congress would not alter it.
  - Citizenship was not a privilege blacks received.
  - Certain groups (i.e. black soldiers) demanded certain privileges based upon status – right to ride street cars.
  - would continue to fight for social equality
- Blacks felt the need to prove their institutions were as good as whites.
  - Set up precedence for separate but equal rhetoric

Other Sources:

- Congressional Globe: 27 Congress, 2 session, 1865-1869
- The Evening Star
- Washington: The National Archives
- The National Intelligencer
- The National Republican