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The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress

Series 1. General Correspondence. 1833-1916.

Josephine S. Griffing to Abraham Lincoln, Saturday, September 24, 1864 (Political affairs; Treatment of Freedmen) –

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Josephine S. Griffing to Abraham Lincoln, Saturday, September 24, 1864 (Political affairs; Treatment of Freedmen)

From Josephine S. Griffing to Abraham Lincoln¹, September 24, 1864

Burlington Iowa Sept 24./64

Hon Sir

Allow me to say -- in a flying trip from Washington to this place I have among the Radicals in Pitts -- Cleave -- Toledo -- Detroit Battle Creek and Chicago labored earnestly to correct their mistakes -- in complaining of the administration and remaining idle themselves-- So far I have spoken more in private among leading men, than in public -- (that we may not seem in a radical sense divided) -- urging an enthusiastic support of your administration

I am satisfied that my effort has not been in vain. I shall go into Wisconsin next week & do some work -- then the remainder of the time till Election will hold meetings in Indiana as they need great efforts there.

From Washington here, I have noted the vote taken on the cars -- generally a respectable majority for us -- but between Toledo and Detroit a tie. From Detroit to Chicago in a vote of 160-21 -- majority for the Republican Candidate.-- I am surprised to find in the West so little enthusiasm in our Party but it is now increasing-- It would be well if many more speakers were in the field -- and Administration documents in circulation.-- Democrats in Ill, and Ind, are determined to outdo themselves, in carrying those States for Mc'Lellan--² It requires great effort on our part to prevent it.

In making this trip I have called upon the Freedmens Associations -- to secure more practical cooperation with the Gov't in the Relief and security necessary for the Freedmen. At Chicago -- at a Convention of Delegates from all the N. W. Freedmens Relief Associations -- I proposed the plan spoken of in your Hon presence -- before I left Wash.

viz, that the Loyal States in the North and East invite, to assylum among them a part of the Freedmen, requiring employmt and immediate relief -- and that these associations become security for the State until further appropriation is made from the State Treasury -- thus relieving the general Government from its crushing responsibility in this matter.

The convention passed a Unanimous resolution enclosing the measure, and urging it upon all Loyal Statesmen & Phylanthropists -- which I shall present to the Governors of the Northern States -- together with the enclosed paper -- unless you see in it some radical defect-- I mean in the plan proposed -- for the Governors to reccommend.

I have seen Gov Blair³ on the subject He approves the movemnt -- says every Co-- in Mich needs laborers -- and there is plenty of provisions in the State. He asked for a feasible plan -- said the Western Governors would confer upon it and he thought incorporate into their Messages or a State Paper a proposition and recommend for further cooperation in the Relief of the Freedmen.

I expect to meet Gov's Yates, Stone, and Saunders⁴ on the 26th at the opening of the Iowa State Fair, and present the subject to them. Sen. Grimes⁵ tells me that Stone and Saunders will be favorable to the measure he thinks-- But he is not sure that Governor's Yates and Morton⁶ will think ~~the measure~~ it compatable with their Black Laws.

This movemnt is a silent one untill after the Election.

Will your Excellence glance at the proposed plan in the papers enclosed, and tell me if you think it wise and feasible. I think Sec. Fessenden⁷ will favor something of the kind -- from what he has said to me on the subject -- and I hope Sec Staunton⁸ will also.

Most Respectfully

Josephine S. Griffing

Box 1192 -- Chicago, Ills

[Enclosure:]

Nearly two years have passed since the Proclamation of Emancipation was issued in this Country.

The events of the war during that time and the present position of the Rebels in arms against the country -- prove the measure to have been wise and necessary-- And it is the inevitable conclusion of the President, the Soldier, and the Loyal citizen both North and South that the suppression of Rebellion and Emancipation must go hand in hand till Union liberty and peace are finally restored.

As the result of Emancipation the Freedmen are thrown upon society in a comparatively helpless condition -- losing in their release from bondage the provision and protection that ownership in them as Slaves, secured; such as food, shelter, and raiment, sufficient to keep them in good working condition.

It is decided that Troops from the Colored Race are indispensable to the Army. Most of the able bodied men from among the Freedmen are already in the service -- and it is not unlikely that all will be required in the conclusion of our National struggle-- The women and children and the old and infirm are consequently left without natural protection and support.

The General Government has thus far through Military Agents, given protection and such provision as it could, to all Freedmen coming within the Federal lines. Transportation, rations and temporary homes have been furnished to nearly half a million.

The Freedmen's Relief Associations and Commissions the Missionary societies and contributions from the Benevolent Public at home and abroad, have greatly aided the Government in providing immediate relief for the suffering among them.

The victories of Atlanta and Mobile, and the probable continued successes, of our Army in Georgia and Alabama, will unlock a great Slaveholding District and throw half a million more Freemen into the Federal lines.

At this crisis of the War, it must be seen that the responsibilities of the Government to the Army, are great and imperious -- and its duties inconceivable to the common mind. The men must be obtained and the Soldier paid to prosecute the war until Rebellion is put down and Government and Liberty established.

It is likewise true that the Freedmen have just and urgent claims upon the Government for security and temporary relief -- during their transition from Slavery to Freedom -- and to provide this, the most vigorous and generous cooperation of the Loyal States will be required, during the War.

I therefore recommend -- that as soon as may be practical the State of _____ offer an Assylum during the War or without limit to as many Freedmen as the deficiency in laborers, the abundance of provisions, the condition of the Treasury, and the guarantee of the Freedmens Associations, and voluntary contributions in the State shall warrant. And I do this, from the necessity of the case, arising from the pressure of the War upon the Government -- the unorganized condition of labor in the South and the consequent lack of abundance of provision to feed both the Army and the Freedmen in the Rebellious States.

And I would further recommend, that at the sitting of the Legislature an Agent be appointed whose salary shall be paid from the Treasury of the State, to canvass this state and in view of the conditions named in the previous sections, and the general temper of the inhabitants in reference to their extended cooperation with the general Government in providing for the employment and general welfare of the Freedmen, report to the Department in Washington having this matter in charge that the State of _____ will guarantee security in temporary homes and employment to a stated number -- if in this way it can relieve the Gen. Government in a small degree, and assist the Freedmen to become selfsupporting.

I would also recommend and encourage the Organization of County and Township Societies on a plan similar to the Soldiers Aid Societies, and auxiliary to the State Commission -- for the purpose of raising money, and furnishing supplies, not only for the few Government may deem it wise to send into this State, but for the masses that must remain in the Southern States.

I would likewise call upon the Christian churches in the State of _____ to organize in each Church Freedmens Missionary societies answering to the Christian Commission in its aim -- auxiliary to the State or some Commission appointed for the purpose -- whose object shall be to raise money and to cooperate with the Gov't in relieving the Physical suffering of the Freedmen and also to embrace the higher interests - such as, the social order, civilization education, and religion, among them.

If it is a crime for the Heathen Mother to throw her babe into the jaws of the devouring crocodile -- what judgments may be reserved for this Christian nation who snatch from the womb of Chattel Slavery a Race of Immortal Beings and throw them raw and naked into the jaws of starvation and the devouring blasts of winter.

With a cheerful and vigorous cooperation of the whole people in the Loyal States through practical measures and generous appropriations -- the tax will be light upon all -- the general Government will be relieved, justice to the Freedmen and a safe policy to the Administration secured -- and the righteousness that exalteth a nation will before the civilized world, and the wise Ruler of the Universe bring us our great reward.

[Note 1 Griffing was a reformer who became active in the abolition movement after she and her husband moved to Ohio in the 1840s. The Griffing home served as a station on the Underground Railroad and Mrs. Griffing gave abolition lectures as an agent of the Western Anti-Slavery Society. In the 1850s Griffing became an advocate of women's suffrage and following the outbreak of the Civil War, she turned her attention to the plight of former slaves. Griffing became an agent for the National Freedmen's Relief Association and lobbied for the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau. Griffing served as an assistant commissioner for the Freedmen's Bureau and when her work with this organization was completed, she resumed her role as a leader in the movement for women's suffrage. She served as president of the Universal Franchise Association of the District of Columbia and as the corresponding secretary of the National Woman's Suffrage Association.]

[Note 2 General George B. McClellan was the Democratic nominee for president.]

[Note 3 Austin Blair]

[Note 4 Richard Yates was governor of Illinois (1861-65), William M. Stone was governor of Iowa (1864-68) and Alvin Saunders was governor of the Nebraska Territory (1861-67).]

[Note 5 James W. Grimes]

[Note 6 Oliver P. Morton]

[Note 7 William P. Fessenden]

[Note 8 Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton]

Burlington Iowa Sept 24. 1864
To the Pres. of the United States
Abraham Lincoln
New Ser

Allow me
to say - in a flying trip from Washington
to this place I have among the Radicals
in Pitts. - Ohan. - Toledo. - Detroit. - Battle Creek
and Chicago labored earnestly to correct
their mistakes - in complaining of the
administration, and remaining idle
themselves - So far I have spoken more
in private among leading men, than
in public (that we may not seem in
a Radical sense divided) - urging an
enthusiastic support of your administration.

I am satisfied that my effort has not
been in vain. I shall go into Wisconsin
next week & do some work. When the
remainder of the time till election will
hold meetings in Indiana, as they must

great efforts there.

From Washington you know I have
noted the vote taken on the cure generally
a respectable majority for us but between
Columbus and Detroit & Co. From Detroit to
Chicago in a vote of 160-21. Majority for
the Republican candidate. I am
surprised to find in the West so little
intrinsicness in our Party - but it is now
increasing. It would be well if many
more speakers were in the field and

administration documents in circulation.
Democrats in Ill. and Ind. are determined
to outdo themselves in carrying those
States for the Union. It requires great effort
on our part to prevent it.

In making this trip I have called
upon the Trustees Associations to secure
more practical cooperation with the Gov't
in the relief and security necessary for the
freedom. At Chicago at a Convention
of Delegates from all the N.W. Trustees Relief
Associations I proposed the plan spoken

of in your Hon. presence before I left Wash.
viz. that the loyal States in the North
and East unite to assuage among them
a part of the Freedmen, requiring timely
and immediate relief - and that these
associations become security for the State
until further appropriation is made
from the State Treasury - thus relieving
the general Government from its crushing
responsibility in this matter.

The Convention passed a unanimous
resolution endorsing the measure, and
urging it upon all loyal Statesmen &
Philanthropists which I shall present to
the Governors of the Northern States together
with the enclosed paper - unless you see
in it some radical defect - I mean for
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I have seen Gov. Plein on the subject
He opposes the movement - says every Co-
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feasible plan - said the Western Governors

would confer upon it - and be thought
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State Paper a proposition and recommend
for further cooperation in the Relief of the
Freedmen.

I expect to meet Gov's Water, Stone, and
Saunders on the 26th at the opening of the
Lower State Fair, and present the subject
to them. Sen. Grimes tells me that Stone
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Measure he thinks - But he is not sure
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think ^{it} ~~the measure~~ compatible with the
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This movement is a dilent one
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Will your Excellency
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enclosed, and tell me if you think it wise
and feasible. I think Sec. Sumner will
favor something of the kind - from what
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hope Sec. Stanton will also. Most Respectfully,
Bof 1192 Chicago, Ill. } Josephine S. Criffing

Nearly two years have passed since the Proclamation of Emancipation was issued in this country. The events of the war during that time and the present position of the Rebels in arms against the country, prove the measure to have been wise and necessary - and it is the inevitable conclusion of the President, the Colonel, and the Loyal citizen both North and South that the suppression of Rebellion and Emancipation must go hand in hand till Union Liberty and Peace are finally restored.

As the result of Emancipation the Freedmen are thrown upon society in a comparatively helpless condition. Lacking in their release from bondage the provisions and protection that ownership in them as slaves secured; such as food, shelter, and instruction; sufficient to keep them in good working condition.

It is decided that Troops from the Colonel State are indispensable to the Army. Most of the able bodied men from among the Freedmen are already in the service and it is not unlikely that all will be required in the conclusion of our National Struggle. The women and children and the old and infirm are consequently left without natural protection and support.

The General Government has thus far through Military Agents, given protection and such provision as it could, to all Freedmen coming within the Federal lines. Transportation, rations and temporary homes have been furnished to nearly half a Million

The Freedmen's Relief Associations and Commissions
the Missionary Societies and Contributions from the Benevolent
Public at home and abroad, have greatly aided the Government
in providing immediate relief for the suffering and suffering them.

The victories of Atlanta and Mobile, and the probable
continued success of our Army in Georgia and Alabama, will
unlock a great Slaveholding District and throw half a
million more Freedmen into the Federal lines.

At this crisis of the war, it must be decided that the responsibilities
of the Government to the Army, are great and imperious and its duties
inconceivable to the common mind. The men must be obtained and
the soldier paid to prosecute the war until Rebellion is put down
and Government and Liberty established.

It is likewise true that
the Freedmen have just and urgent claims upon the Government
for security and temporary relief during their transition from slavery
to Freedom and to provide this, the most vigorous and generous
cooperation of the loyal States will be required, during the War.

I therefore recommend that as soon as may be practical
the State of _____ offer an Act of Assembly during the war or without
limit to as many Freedmen as the deficiency in laborers, the abundance
of provisions, the condition of the Treasury and the guarantee of the
Freedmen's Associations, and voluntary contributions in the State
shall warrant, and I do this, from the necessity of the case, arising
from the pressure of the war upon the Government - the unorganized
condition of labor in the South and the consequent lack of abundance
of provision to feed both the Army and the Freedmen in the Rebellious
States.

And I would further recommend, that at the sitting
of the Legislature an Agent be appointed whose salary shall
be paid from the Treasury of the State, to canvass this State and in
view of the conditions named in the previous sections, and the
general temper of the inhabitants in reference to this extended
cooperation with the general Government in providing for
the employment and general welfare of the Freedmen, report
to the Department in Washington leaving this matter in charge
that the State of _____ will guarantee ^{employment} security, and
employment to a stated number - if in this way it can
relieve ^{the free} Government in a small degree, and assist the Freedmen
to become self-supporting.

I would also recommend and
encourage the organization of County and Township societies
on a plan similar to the Soldiers Aid societies, and auxiliary
to the State Commission for the purpose of raising money, and
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must remain in the Southern States.

I would likewise call upon
the Christian Churches in the State of _____ to organize in
each Church Freedmen's Missionary societies answering to the
Christian Commission in its arm - auxiliary to the State or
some Commission appointed for the purpose - whose object
shall be to raise money and to cooperate with the Gov't in
relieving the Physical suffering of the Freedmen - and also to
embrace the higher interests such as, the social order, civilization,
education, and religion, among them.

If it is a crime for the Heavens to throw him
back into the jaws of the devouring crocodile, what
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who snatch from the womb of Chattel Slavery a Race of
Immortal Beings and throw them raw and naked
into the jaws of starvation and the devouring blasts of
winter.

With a cheerful and vigorous cooperation of
the whole people in the loyal States through practical
measures and generous appropriations - the tax will be light
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justice to the Freedmen and a safe policy to the Adminis-
tration secured - and the righteousness that exalts a Nation
will before the civilized world, and the wise Ruler of the
Universe bring us our great reward.

Burlington Conn.

Sept 24, 1864

Mr Josephine S. Griffing
advises that each of the
States East, West, & North
offer an asylum to the
Slaves made free by the
Emancipation Proclamation,
so as to take off from the
General Government the
great responsibility of
taking care of them.

J. S.