

## House Divided

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. (1) I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free...It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward (2), till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new -- North as well as South."

"Two years ago the Republicans of the nation (3) mustered over thirteen hundred thousand strong. We did this under the single impulse of resistance to a common danger, with every external circumstance against us...The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail -- if we stand firm, we shall not fail. Wise counsels may accelerate, or mistakes delay it, but, sooner or later, the victory is sure to come."

### Notes

1) **House Divided:** These excerpts are taken from Lincoln's June 1858 acceptance speech, delivered to the state Republican convention after he received the party's nomination as Republican candidate for the Illinois Senate race. Lincoln lost the election to the Democratic incumbent, Senator Stephen A. Douglas, but he became nationally known as a leader of the Republican Party and a forceful opponent of slavery, which helped his later bid for the Presidency. The house divided image draws upon the words of Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 12:25) "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand."

2) **Push It (Slavery) Forward:** The recent Dred Scott decision by the Supreme Court, which held that slaves remained the property of slave owners even if they were in free states, convinced opponents of slavery that southern leaders were engaged in a powerful conspiracy to expand slavery. According to Lincoln, either they would succeed, or slavery would gradually become extinct—there was no middle ground.

3) **Two Years Ago The Republicans:** Lincoln referred to the party convention of 1856, in which the party, founded only two years earlier, nominated Senator John Fremont of California as presidential candidate. Fremont lost a bitter campaign to Democrat James Buchanan. The election results showed a nation already divided over the expansion of slavery into new territory.

Transcript: Abraham Lincoln, House Divided speech (June 16, 1858)  
[www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/...fs/t-02533.pdf](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/...fs/t-02533.pdf)

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