

## **“Our Country is now in a Disturbed Condition” The Views of a Former Confederate Supporter in 1865**

In this letter from 1865, Edwin H. McCaleb, a former supporter of the Confederacy, responds to Lincoln’s death, describes conditions in the post-war South, and expresses distrust towards President Andrew Johnson.

Our country is now in a disturbed condition caused by the fiery ordeal through which we just passed and the total absence of both military or civil laws. Were it not for the law abiding disposition of our people we would be subjected to the augur of lawlessness and outrage. All good citizens deeply deplore the assassination of Pres. Lincoln ... Mr. L – was a great man and more than that was a good man and the country could ill afford to lose his services at this important crisis.... Mr. Johnson has disregarded the requirements of the Constitution & undertakes to enact military governments over the states. And more than this, men are now being tried for their lives before military courts...instead of the civil tribunals [courts] of the land. This is in direct violation of the Constitution as these...were in no way connected with the Army.

By this sudden system of Emancipation, this spasmodic transformation of the ignorant Negro from a peaceful laborer who has been accustomed to have all needs...provided...both in sickness & health to a self reliant citizen will paralyze the productive resources of the South. It can cause a famine in this fertile land. If we could have a system of gradual emancipation our people would universally rejoice & be glad to get rid of slavery which as ever been a cancer upon the body politic of our social organization....We would gladly substitute white for slave labor but we can never regard the Negro our equal either intellectually or socially.

The government ought to pursue a magnanimous [generous] merciful & conciliatory [peacemaking] course towards those who have striven to be honorable & who have acknowledged ourselves fairly beaten. Let the northern people arise in the majesty of their power and stay the uplifted hand of official oppression and hatred.

I was only 17 years of age when this war commenced & the last speech I made before leaving college for the army was against secession and advocating the sovereignty of the Federal Government and yet I am not among the proscribed [banned from participation in government] because I held a petty office in the army.

*Source: Digital History at [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/documents/documents\\_p2.cfm?doc=180](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/documents/documents_p2.cfm?doc=180)*

### Questions to consider while reading:

- What was Edwin McCaleb’s opinions of President Lincoln and President Johnson?
- Why was McCaleb concerned about the “sudden system of Emancipation” of former slaves?