

Proclamation 8923 of December 31, 2012**150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation**

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On December 31, 1862, our Nation marked the end of another year of civil war. At Shiloh and Seven Pines, Harpers Ferry and Antietam, brother had fought against brother. Sister had fought against sister. Blood and bitterness had deepened the divide that separated North from South, eroding the bonds of affection that once united 34 States under a single flag. Slavery still suspended the possibility of an America where life and liberty were the birthright of all, not the province of some.

Yet, even in those dark days, light persisted. Hope endured. As the weariness of an old year gave way to the promise of a new one, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation—courageously declaring that on January 1, 1863, “all persons held as slaves” in rebellious areas “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” He opened the Union Army and Navy to African Americans, giving new strength to liberty’s cause. And with that document, President Lincoln lent new moral force to the war by making it a fight not just to preserve, but also to empower. He sought to reunite our people not only in government, but also in freedom that knew no bounds of color or creed. Every battle became a battle for liberty itself. Every struggle became a struggle for equality.

Our 16th President also understood that while each of us is entitled to our individual rights and responsibilities, there are certain things we cannot accomplish on our own. Only a Union could serve the hopes of every citizen, knocking down the barriers to opportunity and giving each of us the chance to pursue our highest aspirations. He knew that in these United States, no dream could ever be beyond our reach when we affirm that individual liberty is served, not negated, by seeking the common good.

It is that spirit that made emancipation possible and codified it in our Constitution. It is that belief in what we can do together that moved millions to march for justice in the years that followed. And today, it is a legacy we choose not only to remember, but also to make our own. Let us begin this new year by renewing our bonds to one another and reinvesting in the work that lies ahead, confident that we can keep driving freedom’s progress in our time.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 1, 2013, as the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation and reaffirm the timeless principles it upheld.

Proc. 8924

Title 3—The President

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand twelve, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-seventh.

BARACK OBAMA

Proclamation 8924 of December 31, 2012

National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, 2013

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

This month, we rededicate ourselves to stopping one of the greatest human rights abuses of our time. Around the world, millions of men, women, and children are bought, sold, beaten, and abused, locked in compelled service and hidden in darkness. They toil in factories and fields; in brothels and sweatshops; at sea, abroad, and at home. They are the victims of human trafficking—a crime that amounts to modern-day slavery.

As Americans, we have long rejected such cruelty. We have recognized it as a debasement of our common humanity and an affront to the principles we cherish. And for more than a century, we have made it a national mission to bring slavery and human trafficking to an end.

My Administration has been deeply committed to carrying this legacy forward—beginning with trafficking that happens on our own shores. We have strengthened protections so all workers know their rights, expanded efforts to identify and serve domestic victims, devoted new resources to dismantling trafficking networks, and put more traffickers behind bars than ever before. In the months ahead, we will continue to take action by empowering investigators and law enforcement with the training they need, and by engaging businesses, advocates, and students in developing cutting-edge tools people can use to stay safe. We will invest in helping trafficking victims rebuild their lives. And as one of the world's largest purchasers of goods and services, the Federal Government will keep leading by example, further strengthening protections to help ensure that American tax dollars never support forced labor.

Our commitment to stopping human trafficking does not end at our borders. As a leader in the global movement to combat this scourge, the United States has renewed sanctions on governments that harbor the worst offenders. We have partnered with groups around the world to help men, women, and children escape their abusers. And recognizing that no country can meet this challenge alone, we have aided others in addressing modern slavery's root causes, and encouraged nations across the globe to pass comprehensive anti-trafficking laws, enforce them rigorously, and care for survivors.

We know the road ahead is long, and change will not come easily. But as we renew our pledge to erase modern forms of slavery from the face of this earth, let us also draw strength from the movements of the past. We recall