

## *How Does It Feel To Be Emancipated?*

On September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued one of the most important proclamations in the history of our nation. It stated that 3 million slaves would be set free if their masters were still in rebellion on the coming New Year's Day. All remaining slaves were freed by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution that was ratified on December 18, 1865. It decreed that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

If one had been a slave during those times, consider what a feeling of exhilaration and optimism must have been experienced when President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation! Suddenly, a life filled with drudgery and despair became one filled with hope and expectations.

Yes, 3 million of our citizens were granted their freedom 121 years ago. Today, there are still 5 million "slaves" in the United States and these unfortunate citizens have not been freed. Who are they? They are second-class citizens who have been denied knowledge of their heritages and early years. Most do not know their nationalities. The majority have no knowledge of their birthparents or date and place of birth. Few have accurate genetic blueprints. These 5 million slaves are America's adoptees.

Emma May Vilardi, who founded the International Soundex Reunion Registry in 1975, is a remarkable lady who feels that adoptees deserve to be emancipated after many years of involuntary servitude. Therefore, Emma Vilardi composed a "Deed of Emancipation" in the spring of 1983. This deed states that the Executor of such deed declares his or her emancipation from all parental controls and authority, from any agency or source of authority that tends to impose a minority status and parental controls "over my adult person without my express permission, or freedom of choice," from any legislative body which enacts and empowers said agencies and parents, due to appropriation of my person and identity by an act of adoption in infancy, to enforce any State Law which shall abridge or deny the Privileges, Freedoms, Rights and Immunities granted to me in equality with all citizens.

It is suggested that this deed be filed by the adoptee in the present county of residence, in the county of birth and in the county where original court of jurisdiction exists.

How does it feel for an adoptee to become emancipated? George Anthony, a Trustee of the International Soundex Reunion Registry and resident of Carson City, Nevada, can answer that question. On April 1, 1983, he filed a "Deed of Emancipation" at the courthouse in Carson City. It was accepted and recorded and might possibly be the first such deed to have been filed and recorded in the United States.

Relating his experience, Anthony says that he didn't expect the deed to cause the courts to open their records immediately and to tell him about his heritage. Nor did he expect the filing of the deed to produce birthparents and siblings immediately. Rather, he feels that the document might be of some value when a parental consent or Waiver of Confidentiality is demanded. It should also be useful with the courts and with other sources.

The slaves were freed in 1862. Now, in 1983, adoptees have an opportunity to be emancipated by filing the "Deed of Emancipation." Isn't it about time?

This article was written by  
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