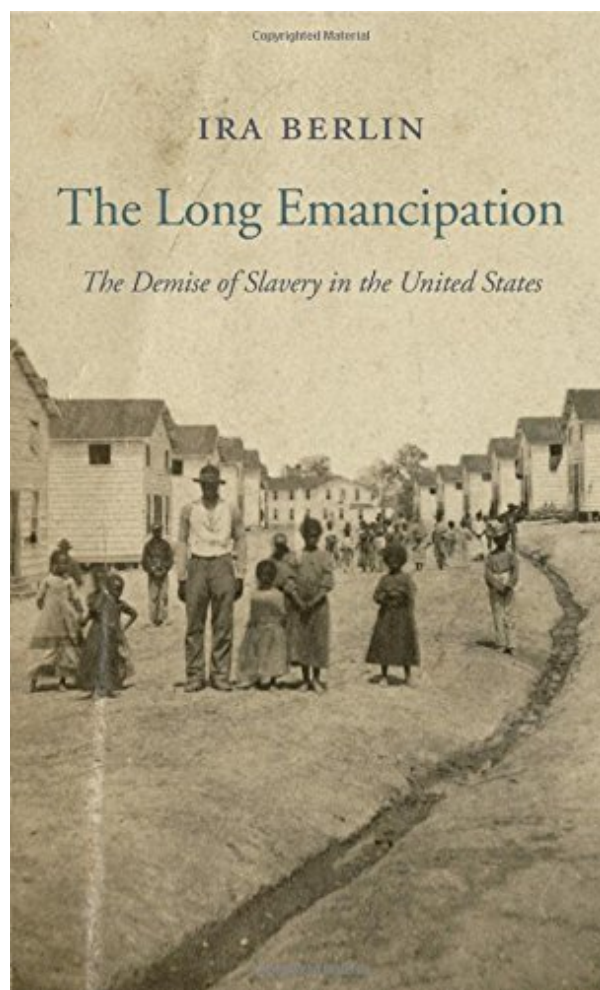


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OF SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES (THE
NATHAN I. HUGGINS LECTURES) BY IRA
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The Long Emancipation

The Demise of Slavery in the United States



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Review

Ira Berlin ranks as one of the greatest living historians of slavery in the United States... *The Long Emancipation* offers a useful reminder that abolition was not the charitable work of respectable white people, or not mainly that. Instead, the demise of slavery was made possible by the constant discomfort inflicted on middle-class white society by black activists. And like the participants in today's Black Lives Matter movement, Berlin has not forgotten that the history of slavery in the United States?especially the history of how slavery ended?is never far away when contemporary Americans debate whether their nation needs to change. (Edward E. Baptist *New York Times Book Review* 2015-09-13)

The cause of the end of slavery in the U.S. is a long, complex story that is usually, in the general reading public's mind, simplified by 'the Civil War ended it.' In this remarkably cogent, impressively thought-out, and even beautifully styled account by a university historian, we are given emphatic witness to his long-held professional conviction that 'freedom's arrival,' as he phrases it, was not due to a 'moment or a man' but because of a process that took a century to unfold. (Brad Hooper *Booklist* (starred review) 2015-08-01)

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Perhaps no event in American history arouses more impassioned debate than the abolition of slavery. Answers to basic questions about who ended slavery, how, and why remain fiercely contested more than a century and a half after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. In *The Long Emancipation*, Ira Berlin draws upon decades of study to offer a framework for understanding slavery's demise in the United States. Freedom was not achieved in a moment, and emancipation was not an occasion but a near-century-long process—a shifting but persistent struggle that involved thousands of men and women.

Berlin teases out the distinct characteristics of emancipation, weaving them into a larger narrative of the meaning of American freedom. The most important factor was the will to survive and the enduring resistance of enslaved black people themselves. In striving for emancipation, they were also the first to raise the crucial question of their future status. If they were no longer slaves, what would they be? African Americans provided the answer, drawing on ideals articulated in the Declaration of Independence and precepts of evangelical Christianity. Freedom was their inalienable right in a post-slavery society, for nothing seemed more natural to people of color than the idea that all Americans should be equal.

African Americans were not naive about the price of their idealism. Just as slavery was an institution initiated and maintained by violence, undoing slavery also required violence. Freedom could be achieved only through generations of long and brutal struggle.

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