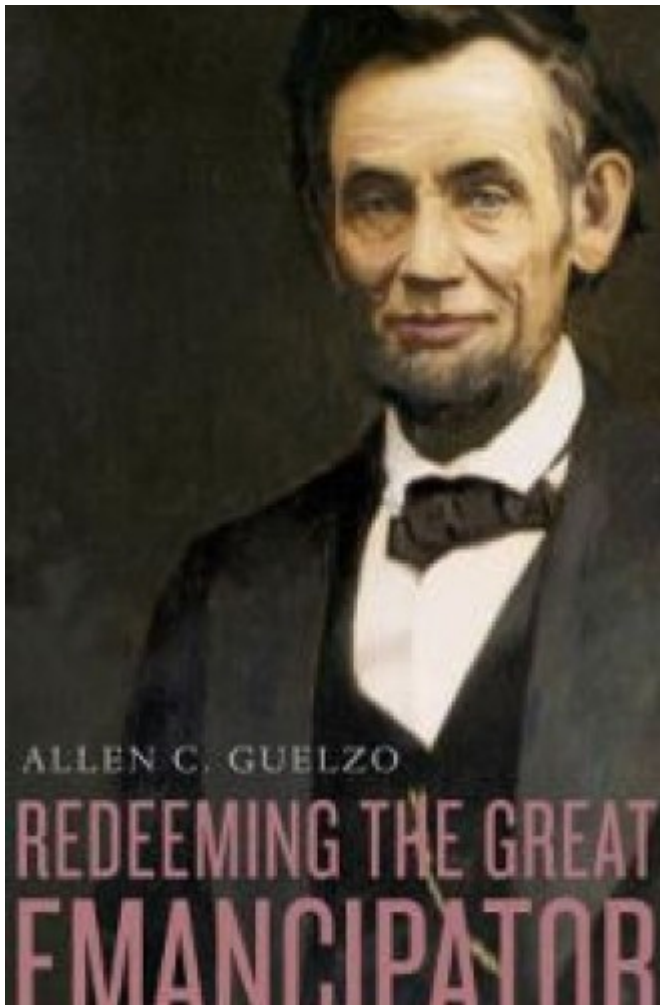


Redeeming the Great Emancipator, by Allen C. Guelzo

Books in the [January 20, 2016](#) issue

In Review



Redeeming the Great Emancipator

By Allen C. Guelzo

Harvard University Press

Although it is anachronistic to put it this way, the subtext of this reappraisal of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator is the question, “Do black lives matter?” That question put to Lincoln doesn’t yield a simple question. While Lincoln came to see

slavery as a great blemish on the American soul, and he was the first president to invite African Americans to the White House for a consultation about the future of blacks in America, Lincoln nevertheless lacked racial empathy. Moreover, as Guelzo puts it, "slavery, for Lincoln, was a political and economic problem before it was a racial one." The redemption suggested by the title would rescue Lincoln from those who uncritically celebrate Lincoln's role in granting greater equality to blacks and those who demean it.