



## Handwritten preliminary version of Emancipation Proclamation on display in Syracuse

by [Alex Dunbar](#)

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SYRACUSE -- Syracuse high school student Sufyan Muhammad knew the Emancipation Proclamation was one of the most important documents in U.S. history but after he saw Abraham Lincoln's handwriting up close - the document took on new meaning.

"It's breathtaking - to know it's history," said Muhammad.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was issued during the Civil War and ordered all slaves to be freed. On Thursday, the preliminary version of that document was in Syracuse as part of an eight city tour. The final version was lost in a fire so the preliminary document is the only version that exists in Lincoln's own handwriting.



A steady crowd of people came through the Oncenter on Thursday to see the Emancipation Proclamation. By 4:30 pm, more than 1400 people had waited in line to get a first hand look at the historical document.

"It's total history - in that we should think about what our forefathers had to go through so that we can do the things we are doing today," said Desi Arnez Johnson Sr. from Syracuse.

"The Syracuse area was an important part of the anti-slavery movement and the underground railroad. On the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation you can see just how much input a Central New York native William Seward had on the historic document.

Seward was Lincoln's Secretary of State and made several revisions to the wording on the preliminary version.

Syracuse high school students Aman Ayol and Kaejah Mervil said that seeing important piece of history as a work in progress inspired them to do more research on their own.

"There's a lot of unsolved questions and things I want to know," said Ayol.

"It's like they were normal people like us and to see the little things they did changed everything - because if he didn't do what he did and he didn't do what he did - I wouldn't be standing here today," said Mervil.

The traveling exhibit celebrating the 150th anniversary of the document is free and open to the public at the Oncenter Convention Center from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Thursday only.

Included in the historic exhibit is Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s original manuscript of a speech he delivered in 1962 in celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation's centennial.

The final version of the [Emancipation Proclamation](#) was issued on January 1, 1863. It declared that all slaves, in states that had seceded from the Union, were free.