

“My error was not in underestimating the value of my words at Gettysburg. My error was in expecting the value of the sacrifice to be remembered. All those young boys died for the cause of freedom. Freedom from domination of one set of ideals over another. Freedom from domination of one group of individuals or one ideology over another.

Your grouping is no more free now than the slaves of southern Georgia were 160 years ago. Your chains are bound to external machines fuelled by external energy sources. They are your masters. My work was not completed. 150 years after my death, reconstruction is not complete.

There is no such thing as too much freedom. When your reason is good and true and points to a higher moral plane where all men are equal, as they were created and made manifest and destined to be, your fight can never end in defeat. No matter how many dead and wounded, you pursue the cause uncompromising.

All such high moral battles are the great markers of historic change - the dates will be known in history, written and deliberated upon by scholars and school girls alike.

How so that our daily preoccupations blur and fade the great moments of change and movement? How so that man fails to deliberate the larger questions, instead contenting himself to count his chickens, spend his fortune and live a minor life when a major one looms, so promising in front of him.

I was always fascinated by the plight of the ‘common man’. I responded genuinely with ease and compassion when asked to witness the needs and desires, the complaints and advice, the ‘uncommon’ man so readily appointed himself to deliver me.

There was a steady stream of visitors, worse during the war. Such tales of woe that I learnt, by seeing such myriad reaction to suffering that all are equally able to live, to fight, to breed, to bleed, but not all handle adversity in like fashion.

So, I ask myself, how to best mold this creation that is I, man? How to best further my character and create a world that is more by my having passed through it?

Giving each man, woman and child who ventured to the House, the chance to express their opinions was one very valuable way. Not only did they depart with an unburdened heart, they spoke of many conditions, tyrannies, plots and conspiracies that gave me an unparalleled window on the world.

From land rights disputes to social and welfare issues, to the greatest landscape of all – the human heart - these people were my classroom of life.

I learnt that to listen was often enough. To allow others their audience, me being the audience of one – silent, focused, not with attention divided but raptly so that their

true feeling and worries were expressed, was enough to give them what they came for – they came for their audience and I was that man, that audience of one.

Aids sometimes wondered at my use of time at these moments, failing to see the larger picture that these small encounters were actually more beneficial to myself than the visitors. It was like being on many rivers, in many rafts at once. Some journeys ended in peace, resolute and well travelled. Others were fraught with hardship and didn't end well.

I learnt from all of them. Now, I know that all journeys do end well – as can be attested to by my fellow JWB. John received full pardon as did many Confederate men.

I learnt how a belief, no matter how erroneous its nature, can grip a man's heart and take over his soul and mind. Our actions, so tied to our eyes, our beliefs so tied to our awareness and understanding of life. All those rafts provided greater understanding. There was never just one river or just one way to get down it. My visitors gave me the incalculable gift of their perspective. All men should be so lucky.

Soula's Story

A young woman named Soula Porter came to see me. She came to discuss how unfair it was that women were not allowed to fight in this war. She wanted their status to be equal to men, citing that The Proclamation of Emancipation gave black men more rights than white women.

Soula was perhaps 23 years old, of mixed race, therefore rejected by both white and black. She wanted to carve out her own well deserved place in this country. Soula asked for emancipation of women, not on the grounds of color but as Adam's equal in the Garden of Eden. Had Eve not acted first? Had not woman a right equal to that of a child she bears?

Soula wanted to enlist in the army. Although she had no vehicle for such a contrarian activity to the norm, she would not be dissuaded. After some wrangling, Soula was granted permission to serve with a medical unit at the front.

Because of Soula, I worked to re-enact the Medal of Military Bravery – later referred to by Franklin Roosevelt as The Purple Heart. Soula worked tirelessly over 5 years foregoing personal comfort in order to allot care and treatment to the sick and dying.

I offer Soula Porter, in the name of all those of the Union who undertook their mission with bravery and allegiance to the ideals of freedom for all, the honor of 'Purple Heart' for her bravery in the field of battle.

Let no man or woman reduce her contribution by citing gender or race. Soula is truly a brave soldier who served her country in its moments of greatest need. The need was much greater than we envisaged it to be. The battle was longer, the war was fiercer and yet, the message of freedom and liberty has been lost!

How is this possible? I am here now to explore the answers to that question and to right the course of events if so doing is possible. I am here to shake up a nation of sleepwalkers, heading oblivious into slavery.

I suffered from a disorder related to the sun. On lovely warm, bright days, I could see 30 to 40 people a day. Bills were read, motions were signed and passed. Administrative duties took up so much time. If I was to forego the one-on-one visits, I feared my administration would lock me in a room with desk, chair and pen, bringing stacks of the country's business to my attention, alternating with the occasional state dinner, lunch out or evening's entertainment. It would be designed to offer just enough distractions to keep me at the task of presiding without affording much opportunity for thinking and concluding and debating various courses of action. I often said I was like a sandwich – the House on one side, the Senate on the other and myself in the middle.

The Pig Story

There was once a young man, a blacksmith, who spent all his spare change fattening up a pig. Any time he had an extra dime, he fattened up the pig with extra food.

One day, he reckoned the pig was ready to go to the slaughterhouse and the young man got all excited. He was thinking of the lovely ring he would buy his girl, the cloth for his mother, the new straps for his dad.

He loaded the pig in the wagon and set off for town. Trouble was, he didn't get far before the wagon broke down on account of the pig being too fat. So, the boy had to walk the pig back home, leading it by a rope. Anyone who knows pigs, knows they hate being tied and they hate being walked. It took the boy ½ a day to cover the 2 miles he had done. When he got back, he was so tired, he forgot to tie up the pig.

While he slept, that darn pig ate all his provisions and then trotted off in the direction of town. When the boy awoke, gone was the pig, gone was his food and gone were his dreams. He never saw the pig again.

I learnt real young, that if I didn't control my temper, if I took to heart all I saw and heard, I would end up like that boy – empty handed with my dreams done and gone.

So, I studied braver, smarter men and how they conducted themselves. I learnt:

- never have only one plan

- keep a little something back, listen well, and talk even less when others are storytelling
- don't count my chickens too early
- my wagon could break down, make sure I know a kindly neighbor who has a stronger, sturdier cart to lend me
- stay humble not meek
- sometimes things will get really, really, bleak – even then, it won't be the end of the world

Back to the pig story.

When the pig got to town, the townspeople thought it was a miracle! They quickly captured the pig, slaughtered it and over 50 families ate meat for the first time in months.

The town wanted to celebrate with a parade. They outfitted their horses and decided to reshoe them as part of the new energy that had descended upon the town – their luck was changing.

The young man in the countryside soon became inundated with orders for horseshoes and his business tripled overnight. He was thrilled. He was able to save so much money, he bought his girl a new ring, his ma that bolt of cloth and new straps for his pa. He even had some left over for himself.

Abe paused and smiled. "Someone else would like to speak. Andrea, I hope we can get together again."

The next day is Monday. I book off work, wait till I'm alone and take my place expectantly with pen and paper by the river vista. Within minutes I feel the urge to write. I'm being asked a question.

"Hi Andrea. I notice that the file on your computer with all your writings is called Ann Lincoln. Why so?"

Because Ann is short for Andrea and I have always felt that the name Lincoln epitomizes integrity, honesty, strength. I wanted my work to reflect those values.

"I too call myself Ann Lincoln. I died at the age of 22. My real work began then, as I steadfastly stood behind my man, guiding, loving and creating opportunities for him. I was there when he courted and married his wife Mary. I was there to cradle their child when Mary was aloof or he was absent. I was there to comfort him in his dreams when he sank into depression from the overwhelming sadness of his own life's losses.

I was there when he called to me in his thoughts. And, I was there to receive him home when he died April 12th, 1864. I do not consider myself as Ann Rutledge. My name is Ann Lincoln.

Did you know that in heaven, you can adopt any name you like? Most change their name to just one word – like Claire, Dawn, Angel, Maya, Daisy. Some who have struggled through greater hardship when still in their physical bodies have chosen names like Deliverance, Justice, Truth.

For me, I have always been Ann Lincoln and my words are spoken as one wedded to my man. In spirit, we were wed, you know. “

She speaks slowly, confident yet gentle. I feel her wisdom and strength.

“When I was suffering through the fever and Abe was by my side, he would sit powerless to help, asking me over and over “What can I do, my darling Ann, to help you? What can I do?” His anguish touched me, his suffering was too great. “Marry me,” I said. “Marry me so that through all eternity we will be wed. Marry me so that our souls may join forever. I am not long for this world. Marry me so our union will carry into the next world and beyond.”

And so we did. Not in a church, not with a preacher. Just together, hands clasped, him kneeling by my bed. We exchanged our vows of love and devotion and before God, we were married. My greatest joy was realized. Soon I stepped out of my ailing body and resumed a more natural state of pure health and wellbeing in the world beyond physical, earthly life.

This story begins here. Call it fact, fiction or fantasy. It is a part of the existence of the world's most well loved politician of the 19th century. To be sure, Abe was also well loved as an orator, senator and judge in the 2nd century, twice in the 4th century, in the 9th as a wandering salesman (he wanted to experience life with no ties, no obligations and no agenda) and then from the 12th to the 19th centuries as a poet, artist, tavern owner and raconteur, actor and politician. To be sure, many of those aspects of his personality were visible in his late 19th century incarnation as well. To be sure, this is true for all of us.

We are who we are and whether enrobed temporarily in physical form or in our natural state of oneness with all life in spirit form, our personalities and proclivities prevail.

Abe and I have been married 11 times in the past. Such is the power of attraction between individuals who have past life history together. The connection travels through the ages. It suffices to come into the same physical space, to look at one another and the link is re-established. Sometimes the reconnection will be for a day. Sometimes it will be for a lifetime. Whichever, whatever, it will be what is most appropriate. Of this, you can be sure.

My early departure created a link between us, a closeness, a sanctuary that would not have been sustained by the demands of physical life. By loving him from this plane, I was able to offer comfort, solace, safe sanctuary, no matter where his travels took him. A personal guardian angel that did so much more than guard.

So this is our life from my perspective. Why do I come to you now? Upon Abe's request of course. With the 150th anniversary of his death approaching, he, a great man of words, is passing the pen to me so that we may convey, in a way not expressed before, his dismay over our carnage of justice and the loss of America's way.

Where are the minds and hearts steering us? All that was fought for, is it to be forgotten and for naught? Liberty, justice, equality, were not just words. They were guiding principles that have been driven, by collective greed and individual profit, into the sea. And look, oh look, how that sea is now polluted. What life will develop from that genetically modified organism that is modern man?

I share a lovely irony with you. In his physical, known as Abe, he intellectualized knowledge. Whatever learning came through his own efforts. Whatever advancement in station came by his own attempt at evolving. A cerebral man, well versed in the common man's voice, Abe appealed to men, not God, for inspiration and wisdom.

This project would not be possible without the suspension of the intellect. In order for you to make space for us, you set aside your intellect, your ego, your power of reason and you surrendered. You surrendered to this impulse, to the flow that began as a very small notion. That drop of a notion became a nudge. It grew into a wave and gathered momentum.

Mostly, Abe believed in the inherent goodness of Man. It was not up to God to fix our woes or heal our sorrows. It was up to us firstly by our right thought and then by our consistent acts.

What was the point of all the Christian rhetoric without the true brotherly acts? The ridiculousness of the discrepancy between Christian doctrine and Christian men and women struck him deeply. No God seemed very present in the affairs of men. What guiding principles really prevailed? Exploitation, greed, self righteousness. And nowhere was it more evident than on the subject of slavery.

No God was present to take me from him so abruptly – so we thought. Now I see things quite differently. He does too. Our love completed us. We needed nothing more. Not more stature, not more position. We needed each other, poetry and the rest would take care of itself.

Of poetry, Abe was a committed study. At first, he would write and rewrite passages in order to casually – although with great feeling – recite them to me as we walked. And then, he began to have an inkling of his mind's capacities untapped. He would recite a verse briefly, once or twice only and then go to bed. Almost miraculously, it would be committed to memory the next morning.

That analogy applies to many aspects of his life. He toiled physically. It was brutal, unpleasant work. He hated it actually. Then Abe discovered he could use his mind to gain his fortune and his life opened up beyond that of others of his generation. His writing and reading skills became his basis for self expression, not how many tree stumps he could clear in a week. He hated those stumps and still does. Words unlocked a new world.

Had I lived, Abe's world would have been both larger and smaller. Our love was enough. This bliss would never stir a man to be more, to shine above others, to jump into the meleed fray of politics and leadership. Our life would have passed unnoticed by others. Confederates might well still take stock of their wealth by numbers of slaves.

I have been privileged – as you all will be when you cross over – to see the impact of our lives had I recovered from my illness. Simply stated, a great statesman was born by my dying.

For Abe, recovery meant climbing out of a black hole of pain. That pain needed soothing and the balm was hard work and constant travel. That is how an unknown lawyer with one term as senator and two other failed attempts came to be president of the United States.

As an aside, Abe is nudging me that he would like to speak. It's not easy for him to allow another such a monopoly!

ABE : "Andrea, my greetings and my unlimited thanks. I would like to make a small comment about a large blunder. There is no ingratitude, just a clarifying of my small role in history. This comment will breed controversy. However, we are both no strangers to it.

The Lincoln Memorial is an abomination. I never was, nor would I ever wish to be, a larger than life hero, sitting on my throne of wisdom like the Lord himself. My politics were simple, the message was consistent and my legacy should be: "He is every man. He is the voice of small reason in an unreasonable world."

I am not the idol to be revered. Please shift your gaze from that marble abomination to one of the fruit trees nearby. Look at it and marvel on its perfection, its pure knowing of when to flower and when to lay fallow. Look at that tree and feel your connection to its ageless wisdom.

If I was to create a Lincoln memorial, it would be a field of trees. Different varieties with their roots sharing the same soil, though each grows independently with its own leaf design, life cycle and individual space on the planet. Such is man. That is the message I leave to you. I have no greater wisdom to give you than that. I would commission a fiddler to walk among them on the anniversary of my death, his music inspiring simplicity and fun.

I would also like to say something about leadership. Beware the leader who is not a man of words. Should there be in my legacy, something that inspires you to lead, know that I was a man of words before I was a man of the people. Through words I found my voice. Beware the leader with no voice, the leader who leads with might not write.

ANN: I'd also like to set the record straight about Abe's mental state dealing with my death. It was not poetry that created the drama. It was because truly, he had just lost the love of his lifetime – this one and many previous ones as well. The brief musings that perhaps his dedication to Byron, Burns and the melodrama of Shakespeare caused his strong reaction, as if he was succumbing to a tragic role, are incorrect.

As said before, our love was such a strong, deep love that it was all we both needed. Upon losing that, Abe had no more rudder, no focus, no path to follow. The prospect of living without me descended him to a cavernous depression. It had nothing to do with an active love of poetry.

Had I lived, that would have been enough for us to have each other. No greater ambition remained. My exit brought Abe to the world, to become ambitiously seeking to distinguish himself and rise beyond the place of pain and loss. That nothing, absolutely nothing mattered to him after my death allowed for an almost total erasure of feeling. Temporarily, he became numb, sought solace in solitude and finally began to understand just how capable he was of surviving. He was stronger than despair, stronger than his pain, stronger than his loss. As the worst had already happened to him, he acquired a new fearlessness that would later show itself during times of trial and division.

This is not to say Abe never felt fear. He certainly did feel loss as well. But, the worst had happened and slowly, I nurtured him through sleeplessness. He was a terrible sleeper, sometimes only dozing 3-4 hours a night. Our talks in those wee morning hours, untainted by noise and city clamour, brought him new life.

It was in the early morning, between 4 and 6 m that Abe's heart slowly began to heal. This is when he learned tolerance and compassion – the two great lessons of his sorrow. This served him well. Even once he achieved national stature, there was never a trace of arrogance. His greatest of sorrows had left him with "The worst has already happened. So now there is nothing to fear." Later, when his son died, he

was able to recover when Mary could not. Recovery was just that, cover up the pain with a layer of distraction – in this case work.

One of Abe's biggest preoccupations at the time of my death was my burial in the cold, wet ground. He could not bear me being cold and felt my wanting for comfort. I was, already, of course, in a wonderful place. It was Abe who needed the comforting not I. I was close, close by but, alas, in the beginning, he felt me only in his dreams and when he walked the woods. Later, our conversations grew.

Perhaps I shall tell you something of what you call death – this great tragedy maker and sorrowful companion to life.

DO NOT CRY FOR US. We are surrounded by the kindest, most benevolent, all knowing and all loving beings. We are part of the great energy of the universe and most of all, we are astoundingly free. Freed from the weight of our physical bodies, we are. Thoughts instantly become reality. Our reality on this plane is one of grandness and bliss and learning and appreciating where our decisions during our lifetimes have brought us.

We learn that all melts back into the cosmic soup. It is ordered. It is perfect. All is perfect.

These words will seem controversial – yes, I am able to stir controversy too. War is OK, rape is OK, all is OK, all eventually leads to oneness.

The scribe, Andrea, is having a hard time with this. She, usually open panned, does not wish to continue on the same vein so I will redirect my expression. There is no hell. Just as there is no religion. All those constructs of physical man are dropped after death. Unless they aren't. The choice always remains to stay trapped in limiting beliefs about sinning, salvation and martyrdom.

All goes back to the whole. You choose if your death brings you to Fear's door or the door of Open Hearted Love which wraps you in its embrace. There is no homecoming like this. It is indescribable – ecstatic.

So, when someone you love crosses over, rejoice for them. They are reuniting with bliss. They are not dead, they are free. The physical shell is shed. Since you treasure that physical as the one you love, embrace every opportunity to caress it, to show it love, to nurture and bathe it in your gaze of kindness.

All reaffirm themselves as spirit. Some embrace this, advance, learn, grow. Some, limited by religious doctrine are somewhat paralyzed by fear. Slowly, slowly, love replaces fear and they acquiesce. Your prayers and the light you shine through your loving thoughts and deeds assist us tremendously.

Does this surprise you? That you have a greater impact than you realize?

In my case, I chose to remain close to Abe. In no way did this interfere in his physical life or his relationships. We met often on the spiritual plane. Yes, I understand this is difficult for you to comprehend. But, you have learnt tough material in the past. You learnt language, you learnt how to walk, you learnt to choose wisely. That continues forever as your spirit evolves.

ABE: My first public statements declared my lifelong sentiment that I am an unknown. I was born humbly and have no wealth or popular relations to recommend me. All has already been lost to me. My mother died, my father dead to me the first time he hit me. My grief over Ann's death was not a descent into poetic tragedy. It was my life, come apart, and my broken heart unable to cope. Ann is correct. My ambivalence about my ambition ended with her death and the death of that dream.

The obstacle, emotional wellbeing and desire to be with Ann, was removed. Thereafter, life was about the business at hand. I argued in the late 1830's that America risked losing what it had gained. The words ring true still, 180 years later. There are but three stages to any endeavour: set the focus, do the work, give thanks. That is really all I did. The goal was clear. The tasks came. The goal achieved, the trueness of intent established. I was grateful. There cannot be any space for arrogance or pulpit smashing. I pretend much but I pretend not to have the answers.

And now, most grave consternation. Were the hearts of men shattered in vain? Their veins split open and spilt onto battered ground and hallowed field. America, oh most beautiful, has lost its way.

To what avail a new law if lawlessness prevails? To what the sacrifice, still carried bravely forth by our women and men of all colors, if the land is not free and the brave find no home there? To what the missions of the righteous if all ears are deaf?

Politics so mixed with personal agenda and greed that faith in the political process has given way to apathy. Oh, that the vote had meaning today.

I remember the ladies clambering for the vote. It was a doctrine I supported but a battle I did not fight, having enough of my own already. Oh, today, as voters ignore their legacy of struggle, I wonder how we wandered so far astray in such short order. I wish to allow Ann, my beloved, the space and leisure of her words, not mine. She does, however, permit me this largesse.

To vote is to be American. To abstain is to ignore the process that created this country.

ANN: I am a country girl – both in spirit and incarnation. To stay in the physical and keep hold of Abe's love meant to keep him provincial. Such was not his destiny. Mary, in contrast to me, brought manners and respectability. As with his law books teaching him his trade, Mary schooled him on the workings of the higher social

classes – essential skills for where he was headed but not something found in books or Byron.

Culture was a privilege of the wealthy while the tavern and the pint was the accompaniment to the poor. Without Mary's guidance, Abe would have remained a backwater mannered young man.

ABE: Ann, I disagree. I made my way around the country. I taught myself a trade and won the trust of men. I then taught myself another trade. It is true I lacked schooling, having had less than seven years in a classroom. What the field did not teach me, my observation, my keen witness of human behaviour, the clan effect, the desires of men, the desirability of women, how differing agendas, while sometimes irreconcilable, could be assuaged simply by listening – all this and more I learnt.

Yet Ann, you are also correct. Mary, bless her, was also a teacher. You were my Shakespeare – tragedy and drama. She was my Burns, initially bringing gayness and luck. Mary was my window on high society. As much as I held myself indifferent to social convention, she pushed open the stays wide and I was able to follow her through. Both of you were part of the man called Abraham.

My purpose in speaking at this time is not to dwell on history. It is to shake America from its slumber. As if a potion of ignorance and small mindedness has overrun the territories. I have never been a delicate man. With Mary's ministrations, I have been schooled but always remained of the common man. Interesting how birth made Mary at home in Washington and it kept me able to make the tough choices that could have made me lose favour so easily. I was not worried to lose the exalted post of President. I had come from nothing, had survived and thrived and would continue to do so.

I did greatly enjoy the power of the presidency. I did also, however, never mistake it for being my doing. As a cast assembles the characters of a play, I was but one in a cast of many, my adversaries contributing as much as my allies.

Mary was both perplexing and unsatisfying, so different from straightforward Ann that I became riled with insecurity and felt my low stature keenly. Where Ann made me feel like a king, Mary had me pegged as a pauper.

My fair Ann and my plump, ample Mary. I was safe with Mary, knowing that should I love her and lose her, no heart would break. I embraced my work as my true companion.

ANN: We observe, we witness and we do not engage to influence choice or outcome. Whether Abe was or was not to marry Mary, I would not and could not affect his choice. Loving from another dimension is another kind of love. It is a love of the entire being and less the flawed human. It is love – purely. Such is the reason that

there is an incredible sense of wellbeing and home coming when one crosses over. One is just loved.

With all the failings of man, there is a tremendous respect for all who make the journey through the physical plane. Abe would like to make his closing remarks.

ABE: A simple man, born of humble roots and having lived humbly, is eulogized in a larger than life marble statue. What irony. A speech, insignificant except for the hallowed ground it was given on, is immortalized. The battle, the victory of freedom over enslavement, is forgotten. I ask myself was that battle really won or has it been lost? Another irony.

Yes, the words do matter. But words alone are hollow if not followed by cohesive deeds. The Gettysburg address was a mere nod to the larger picture. Now the words are carved in stone but the message is forgotten. So much was given up, families torn, suffering was embraced as having a greater cause that would be reflected in the generations to come after. That was the reason for the address.

Here we are, generations after and what has become of the hard won fight? We are more divided as a nation than ever. Brotherhood, where is brotherhood?

I used to curse the trees. They were obstacles that needed felling. Stubborn stumps would not yield. Now, I gaze lovingly at the trees, wishing men would plant more, cut less. I see our rigid egos, like those unyielding stumps, preventing acceptance. Trying to pull Man from his rigid beliefs is more difficult than any stump I battled with in the past.

It is difficult to allow for this message. It is difficult to believe that all men and women live forever. It is the truth. I was always known for honesty and would not lie to you now. This message was brought through because I love my country. I love what we believed to be a greater cause of equality and freedom for all. I still do. I call on you all to be leaders. Lead in your work, lead at the dinner table, lead in the classrooms. Lead in your own thoughts about what is worth fighting for. Ask yourselves, 150 years later, are we living up to the ideals that men died for? They suffered for us, so that we could enjoy all rights, all freedoms, all choices. What choices are we making? If Honest Abe sat at your dinner table tonight, what progress report would you give him?

Let that be my legacy – a reopened debate and dialogue at the dinner table this evening. Are we satisfied with how things are? If not, what change in our own lives can we effect? How can we lead others to ask themselves the same question? It is not enough to be good leaders, we need great leadership. Greatness comes from the inside and cannot be conferred by another.

A faulty structure will crumble quickly with wind and rain. A faulty policy is tougher to knock down. We invest in it, reinforce it, assign value to it and watch it become

entrenched. When it falls, there is much suffering. Many suffered to build a great country. May their suffering not be in vain. There are others waiting to speak. For now, I am done.