

**The Lincoln Academy of Illinois**  
**53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convocation and Investiture of Laureates**  
**Chicago History Museum**  
**May 6, 2017**

*Excerpts of Remarks Delivered by Dr. Stephanie Pace Marshall, Chancellor*

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for your presence tonight. As Chancellor of the Lincoln Academy, it is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to Chicago, to the 53rd annual Convocation and Investiture of Laureates, and to the Chicago History Museum. Founded in 1856, this remarkable museum has become a renowned repository for some of the most significant historical collections and iconic artifacts of our city's, state's and nation's history. It has enabled us to bear witness to poignant and celebratory moments and it has captured the stories of those on whose shoulders we stand.

Tonight, we add the stories of seven remarkable individuals to our distinguished roster of Lincoln Laureates. We gather here tonight privileged to connect to the legacy of Abraham Lincoln. Although he died 152 years ago and 29 presidents succeeded him, his remarkable legacy remains. Why?

Let me tell you a story, shared by Dr. Carla Knorowski, CEO of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation.

On Dec. 21, 2016, then Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon visited the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. As a young boy in Korea, he had learned of Abraham Lincoln and remained inspired his entire life. So, with only 10 days left in his tenure as Secretary General, he travelled to Springfield to fulfill a lifetime quest, visiting the Lincoln Library and Lincoln's tomb to—in his words—“pay respect to the compassionate and courageous man of integrity.”

He was shown many of Lincoln's personal effects—his stovepipe hat—and several historic documents—the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment. But when the Gettysburg Address, written in Lincoln's own hand, was taken out of its protective box and shown to him, Carla called it a “transformative moment.” She described it this way: “He purposefully and reverentially stood up as though Abraham Lincoln himself had just walked into the room; we fell silent as the Secretary General began reading the words out loud, no longer a school boy but a world leader, moved and inspired by Lincoln, once again.”

“Lincoln was a heroic force for equality, integration and reconciliation,” Ban Ki-Moon said. “We desperately need that spirit today.”

Lincoln remains a leader for the ages and the timeless and enduring nature of his global influence guides and inspires us to this day. So the question for us, is not “why do we remember him”? But rather, why MUST we remember him? Why is it essential that we not only keep his legacy alive but we strive to manifest and embody it in our behavior and our work?

Lincoln assumed his presidency with an almost impossible mission: to save the Union. He accomplished this through uncommon leadership that challenged conventional wisdom of what it meant to be a good leader. And he did so with a clear and grounded moral compass. He sought to understand the human struggle just as deeply as he did military strategy. He invited rivals onto his team. Through this integration of wise governance, military acumen, and strategic leadership, he saved the Union and ended slavery.

Those defining elements of his presidential legacy are studied by scholars and viewed in awe by people around the world. But the power of a legacy is not only the remembered stories that create them. The real power of a legacy lies in how those that follow attend to its unfinished business. Legacies represent invitations and they offer opportunities for the future. The dynamics are of course different now, but history helps us to locate ourselves and allows us to understand that the struggles of Lincoln’s time — the struggles for human dignity, inclusion and equality — are also reflected in our time.

So why MUST we remember Abraham Lincoln? Because he possessed a moral ecology framed by a desire to do good and to make a difference and because his legacy inspires us to manifest “the better angels of our nature” and to act with justice, generosity, compassion and fairness. “Our lives begin to end,” the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Lincoln is a dialogue and it’s important that we spend time with him. His legacy reminds us that every day we choose who we want to be and over time those choices create a pattern of who we actually become—a discernible narrative, a map of intentional choices, a lived story; what some would call a legacy. We are imbued with the capacity for covenant keeping and the most authentic way to honor a cherished legacy is to honor its covenants—its promises—and keep them alive.

As we gather tonight to honor seven distinguished citizens of Illinois, we recognize that we have been the beneficiaries of the choices they made and the impact of their contributions on this city, on our state and in our nation. They chose not “to become silent about things that matter”; they lived their lives out loud.

Illinois governor Otto Kerner created the Lincoln Academy in 1964 to honor those whose uncommon achievements simply made us better. We think of them as great citizens of today. Since our first convocation, the Academy has bestowed the Order of Lincoln, our state’s highest honor, on over 300 individuals.

In 1975, the Lincoln Academy also began recognizing the great citizens of tomorrow at a special convocation held each November in Springfield. One outstanding senior from each four-year public and private college and university in Illinois and one student representative of all of the state's community colleges become Student Laureates. Having read all the applications and essays of these students, it is clear they are walking with intention in Mr. Lincoln's footsteps and carry his moral compass in their pocket. Their unapologetic drive and passion to make things better in the lives of their communities and beyond is palpable.

Tonight in Mr. Lincoln's name, we honored the vision, passion, and achievements of seven remarkable individuals.

We celebrated:

- The unyielding pursuit of excellence, exemplary civic leadership, and commitment to wisely educating the next generation of Frank M. Clark;
- The transformational generosity and financial ingenuity of Richard H. Driehaus;
- The principled allegiance to justice and the rule of law of the Honorable James F. Holderman;
- The bold vision for the future of Chicago and selfless civic service of R. Eden Martin;
- The extraordinary athletic achievements, leadership, and compassionate support of children with serious medical conditions of Ryne Sandberg;
- The wise and trusted strategic counsel and national leadership of Samuel Knox Skinner;
- And the business acumen, devotion to service, philanthropy and sustaining dedication of Harrison I. Steans.

Our new Laureates manifest the legacy of Abraham Lincoln and in them, we hear echoes of Lincoln's strength of character, unyielding fortitude, devotion to service and generosity of spirit. "I like to see," President Lincoln said, "a man proud of the place in which he lived. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him."

And tonight there is no doubt that we are both proud and grateful.