

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois
55th Annual Convocation and Investiture of Laureates
Illinois State Capitol
Saturday evening, May 18, 2019

Stephanie Pace Marshall, PhD

CHANCELLOR'S WELCOME:

Good evening everyone and welcome to the 55th Investiture of Laureates of The Lincoln Academy of Illinois.

Today is Armed Services Day and we express our profound gratitude to the men and women who have served and are now serving our nation. We are honored you are here.

Would you please stand so we may recognize you.

On behalf of the Lincoln Academy, I am delighted to welcome you to this magnificent chamber and historic statehouse, as guests of the Illinois House of Representatives and the Speaker of the House, the Honorable Michael Madigan.

It is in this place where our state's most important questions of public policy have been debated for over a century – questions of personal freedom, equity and social justice, human dignity, and life and death.

It is in this place where the women and men who serve here today take the same oath of office that Abraham Lincoln took in 1836, as a member of the general assembly.

And it is also to this place that our children come from across Illinois – not only to see its impressive architecture and learn its history, but to understand our nation's story of freedom and liberty embodied in State Houses all across America and captured in Lincoln's Gettysburg address:

“That Government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth”.

This imperative remains our collective responsibility.

Tonight, we gather to recognize uncommon achievement and to add the names of six remarkable individuals to our distinguished roster of Lincoln Laureates by illuminating the stories of leadership and service, that have defined them and their contributions.

Their pioneering work and selfless civic engagement have profoundly shaped the vibrancy of the cultural, technological, scientific and economic fabric of our State, our nation and our world.

You have read their distinguished bios; so you know that each has been recognized before and many, many times.

But this honor is different, because receiving the Order of Lincoln, our state’s highest honor, carries the name and enduring legacy of our greatest President and his profound impact on the shaping of our nation.

Abraham Lincoln died 154 years ago, yet his legacy is timeless.

When then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, visited the Lincoln Presidential Library and Lincoln’s tomb in 2016, just 10 days before he stepped down as Secretary General, he was fulfilling a lifetime quest.

He had learned about Lincoln as a young boy in Korea, and remained inspired throughout his life, and came to Springfield to, in his words, “pay respects to the compassionate and courageous man of integrity.”

“Lincoln was a heroic force for equality, integration and reconciliation” he said, “we desperately need that spirit today. “

Abraham Lincoln lead with a clear and grounded moral compass.

He sought to understand the human struggle just as deeply as he did military strategy.

He spoke with principled opposition to injustice.

He invited rivals onto his team,

He saved the union and helped to end slavery.

Those defining elements of his presidential legacy are studied by scholars and viewed in awe by people around the world, to this day.

Last year, I visited my grandson in Ecuador.

“I have a surprise for you Grandma”, he said.

Our first stop in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, was a bust of Abraham Lincoln.

The power of a legacy, however, is not only its sculptures, statues, buildings, or even its remembered stories. The real power of a legacy lies in how those that follow – you and I – bear witness and consciously attend to its unfinished business.

Legacies are complex, because we are complex because we are complex. They are not single narratives, because we are not single narratives.

But, beyond inspiration, legacies challenge us to honor covenants and fulfill promises; they offer opportunities to illuminate what might be possible and they issue calls to action to bring these possibilities to life.

The timeless relevance of Abraham Lincoln lies in the greatness of his character, his moral integrity and authority –and his uncompromising commitment to social justice.

In the words of historian Harold Holzer, ‘Lincoln was a humanitarian as broad as the world. He was bigger than our country. Bigger than all the presidents put together.’

Our dynamics are different now, but our struggles for human dignity, inclusion, equality, and fairness remain.

Rather than view them as burdens, we can choose to embrace them as opportunities to lead “in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln”.

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 our great citizens of today.

Since our first convocation, the Academy has bestowed the Order of Lincoln on over 300 individuals.

We are privileged to recognize Laureates from earlier years who are with us tonight.

- Hy Bunn (2015)
- Julie Cellini (2009)
- Frank M. Clark (2017)
- Dr. Naomi Lynn (2012)
- Admiral N. Ronald Thunman (2012)
- Dr. J. Roland Folse (2015)

We also want to acknowledge the passing of three former Laureates and we are deeply grateful to them and their families for their contributions to the Lincoln Academy, the state and our nation.

- John Bryan (1993 – Chicago)
- Howard Steele (2000 – Springfield),
- Harrison Steans (2017 - Chicago)

In 1975, the Lincoln Academy began recognizing our 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.

Their earnestness and unapologetic drive to make a difference and to serve their communities will shape Illinois' future.

Each year, I am privileged to read their applications and to meet them – our future is clearly in very good hands.

Your presence tonight supports them and the Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award they each receive, and we thank you.

The Lincoln Academy has now created an endowment - the Spirit of Lincoln Fund - to sustain our support of this award and begin to explore programming for our Student Laureates, as our Next Generation Leaders, in the "spirit of Abraham Lincoln".

Tonight we are also delighted to recognize six Student Laureates who are here this evening.

- Katrina Brundage (2012 Concordia)
- Charles DeLoach III (2017 Olivet)
- Jomarie Perlas (2017 North Park)
- Andrea Storey (2018 SIU Carbondale)
- Luis Tello (2016 North Central)
- Dylan Warren (2018 Roosevelt)

And now, as is our tradition, our state song, Illinois, will be performed by Dr. Ollie Watts Davis.

INTRODUCTION OF RECIPIENTS OF THE ORDER OF LINCOLN

It is now time to begin what you have been waiting for!

Meeting our new Laureates; their citations are in your program book.

After the reading of each introduction, Governor Pritzker will decorate each person with the Order of Lincoln medal and our new Laureate will speak.

Ladies and Gentlemen, will you please join me in congratulating the new Laureates of the Lincoln Academy.

It is now my privilege to introduce the President of The Lincoln Academy,

The 43rd Governor of the State of Illinois, The Honorable J.B. Pritzker.

GOVERNOR PRITZKER ADDRESSES THE LAUREATES

Thank you, Governor Pritzker, for your thoughtful and inspiring words, and thank you for your commitment to the Lincoln Academy.

We look forward to the years ahead as we continue to advance the work and impact of the Lincoln Academy and the legacy of Abraham Lincoln.

Tonight in Mr. Lincoln's name, we heard the stories and honored the achievements of six remarkable individuals. We need these stories and those of our former Laureates to remind us what we look like when we call our better angels to walk beside us.

And, this evening we were privileged to hear six of them.

On behalf of the Lincoln Academy, I wish each of you courage and Godspeed as you embrace the unfinished work of our time and continue to lead and serve, in the "Spirit of Abraham Lincoln".

Lincoln may belong to the ages, but manifesting his legacy, especially now, belongs to each of us.

TRANSITION OF CHANCELLOR

Before we adjourn this evening, there is one more responsibility for the President of the Academy, Governor Pritzker and that is to confer the Chancellor's Medallion on our new Chancellor, a leadership transition that occurs every three years.

I am delighted to announce that Frank Clark will now become Chancellor of the Lincoln Academy and The Hon. Ron Spears will become Vice Chancellor.

It's been an honor and a privilege to serve as Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the Lincoln Academy for the past five years; and I thank the members of the Academy for this opportunity.

It is now time to welcome our new Chancellor and Vice Chancellor; we look forward to their leadership and their partnership.

I now invite Governor Pritzker and Chancellor Clark to the podium.

Ladies and Gentlemen, The Lincoln Academy of Illinois will now stand in recess until Saturday, April 18, 2020, on the campus of Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois — for our 56th Annual Convocation and Investiture of Laureates.

We hope you will be able to join us.