

The original documents are located in Box 6, folder “2/12/75 - Abraham Lincoln Wreath Laying Remarks” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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MR. AMBASSADOR

MAYOR WASHINGTON

SENATOR BEALL

MR. HUNT

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE *d.s.*

LINCOLN WREATH LAYING REMARKS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1975

WHEN ABRAHAM LINCOLN WAS PRESIDENT, THE HALF-
FINISHED WASHINGTON MONUMENT DOWN THE MALL STOOD AS
SILENT TESTIMONY THAT THE NATION ITSELF WAS STILL
UNFINISHED -- THAT IT WAS YOUNG AND STRUGGLING.

TODAY, I FIND NEW INSPIRATION IN LAYING THIS
WREATH TO THE MEMORY OF LINCOLN ON THE ONE HUNDRED AND
SIXTY - FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN ENVISIONED A PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE --
IN HIS WORDS -- "A JUST AND LASTING PEACE, AMONG OURSELVES,
AND WITH ALL NATIONS." HE SAW THE NEED FOR ACTION TO
FACE AN UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGE. ADDRESSING HIMSELF
TO A NATION THEN DIVIDED, HE PROCLAIMED THAT "THE DOGMAS
OF A QUIET PAST ARE INADEQUATE IN THE STORMY PRESENT."

NONE OF OUR PROBLEMS TODAY ARE AS SEVERE AS
THOSE FACING LINCOLN -- HUMAN SLAVERY AND CIVIL WAR
BETWEEN THE STATES. BUT WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH THE
NEED TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION.

AS PRESIDENT, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE FITTING TO MEMORIALIZE

ABRAHAM LINCOLN BY REDEDICATING THIS ADMINISTRATION TO

REVIVING THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ~~STRENGTH~~ **STRENGTH** WHICH

HE BEQUEATHED TO THE UNITED STATES.

IN HIS FIRST ANNUAL MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS, ON
DECEMBER 3, 1861, LINCOLN STRESSED THAT RESPONSIBILITY
MUST CENTER SOMEWHERE. ADVOCATING ACTION ON

A UNITED PROGRAM FOR A TROUBLED AMERICA, LINCOLN TOLD
THE CONGRESS THAT ^{*exactly*} -- AND THESE ARE HIS ^{*precise*} ~~EXACT~~ WORDS --
_{*1*}

"IN A STORM AT SEA, NO ONE ON BOARD CAN WISH THE SHIP TO
SINK, AND YET NOT INFREQUENTLY ALL GO DOWN TOGETHER
BECAUSE TOO MANY WILL DIRECT AND NO SINGLE MIND WILL
BE ALLOWED TO CONTROL." SO SPOKE LINCOLN.

HE HAD THE COURAGE TO OPENLY ASSERT THAT HE WOULD
CONDUCT THE AFFAIRS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION SO THAT --

AS HE PUT IT -- "IF AT THE END, WHEN I COME TO LAY
DOWN THE REINS OF POWER, I HAVE LOST EVERY OTHER FRIEND
ON EARTH, I SHALL AT LEAST HAVE ONE FRIEND LEFT, AND
THAT FRIEND SHALL BE DEEP DOWN INSIDE ME."

THE FINEST TESTIMONIAL I CAN CONCEIVE FOR
ABRAHAM LINCOLN IS FOR THE CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT TO
UNITE AT ONCE ON AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM FOR NATIONAL
RECOVERY AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE.

I CONCUR WITH THE VISION WHICH LINCOLN PUT THIS

WAY: "WE OF THE CONGRESS AND THIS ADMINISTRATION

WILL BE REMEMBERED IN SPITE OF OURSELVES."

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IN SERVING AMERICA, WE
SHALL NOBLY SAVE OR WEAKLY ABANDON WHAT LINCOLN SO APTLY
DESCRIBED AS "THE LAST GREAT HOPE ON EARTH." THE WAY,
AS IT WAS IN HIS DAY, IS "PLAIN, PEACEFUL, GENEROUS,
JUST -- A WAY WHICH IF FOLLOWED THE WORLD WILL FOREVER
APPLAUD AND GOD MUST FOREVER BLESS."

DESPITE ALL THE TRIBUTE WE CAN PAY HIM, LINCOLN
HIMSELF HONORS HIS OWN MEMORY BEST -- BECAUSE HE LEFT
US A MESSAGE ABOUT HUMILITY AND HUMANITY THAT CONTINUES
TO INSPIRE AND HELP US GROW AS A PEOPLE.

I BELIEVE THE REASON EACH GENERATION OF AMERICANS
FINDS INSPIRATION FROM LINCOLN'S LIFE IS BECAUSE HE SEEMS,
ABOVE ALL, TO HAVE BEEN SO HUMAN HIMSELF.

HE WAS HUMBLE: HIS COMPASSION FOR OTHERS CAME
FROM AN UNDERSTANDING OF HIMSELF.

HE LAUGHED: HE LAUGHED AT HIMSELF AND WITH
OTHERS.

HE RAN FOR PRESIDENT, KNOWING THAT HE FACED THE
MOST GRAVE POLITICAL CRISIS IN THE NATION'S HISTORY:
HE ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN HIS
OWN ABILITY.

IN THESE DAYS OF NEW HARDSHIPS, NEW
RESPONSIBILITIES AND NEW CHALLENGES, IT IS IMPORTANT
FOR US AS A PEOPLE TO REFLECT UPON THE PAST --
TO DRAW STRENGTH FROM TRIUMPHS OVER GREAT TRIALS IN
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WE HONOR THE MEMORY OF LINCOLN BEST -- NOT
ONLY BY FORMAL CEREMONIES -- BUT BY DOING OUR BEST TO
PRESERVE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION. . . THE LEGACY HE
SO PROUDLY HANDED DOWN TO US: GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE,
BY THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE.

END OF TEXT

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN. *af*

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- 1 -

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