

African Americans' Letters to Abraham Lincoln: A Testament of Hope and Struggle

Throughout history, African Americans have played a significant role in shaping the United States. Their contributions, struggles, and hopes are beautifully captured in the letters they wrote to President Abraham Lincoln during his time in office. These letters provide a unique insight into the experiences and aspirations of African Americans during one of the most challenging periods in American history.

The outpouring of letters to President Lincoln reflects the deep faith many African Americans had in his commitment to emancipation and equality. These letters, written by enslaved individuals, free African Americans, and even influential Black leaders of the time, demonstrate the courage it took for African Americans to voice their concerns and dreams to the highest authority in the land, regardless of the risks they faced.

One of the most famous letters written by an African American to President Lincoln is the "Letter from a Freedman to His Old Master." Dated August 7, 1865, the letter was written by Jourdon Anderson, a former slave, in response to his old master's request for him to return to work on the plantation. The letter not only showcases Anderson's intelligence and eloquence but also his determination and refusal to accept anything less than full freedom and fair treatment.

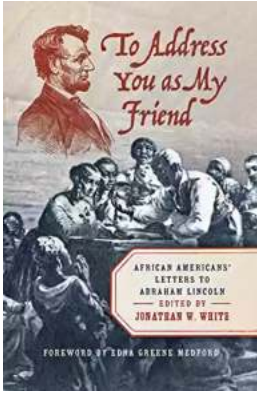
To Address You as My Friend: African Americans' Letters to Abraham Lincoln

by Jonathan W. White (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 22003 KB



Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 291 pages
Screen Reader : Supported



Letter from a Freedman to his Old Master.

The following is a genuine document. It was dictated by the old servant, and contains his ideas and forms of expression. (Continued from Column 1.)

DAYTON, Ohio, August 7, 1865.

To an Old Master, Col. F. H. ANDERSON, Big Spring, Tennessee.

Sir: I got your letter and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jordan, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, possibly to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have had you long before this for harboring Rebels. They found in your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to the Martins to fill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me (before I tell you, I did not want to hear of your being here, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again and see Mrs. Mary and Miss Martha and all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance.

I want to know particularly what the good reason is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here; I get five a month, with victuals and clothing, have a comfortable house for Nancy (she falls free and her Mrs. Anderson) and the children, Billy, Jesse and George, and I am engaged in my shop, and a friend came in and began telling me some stories about a writing medium he had seen, and knowing I was a skeptic wanted my opinion. My opinion, said I, is that it is a humbug. How can this be, he inquired? Look here, I answered, pointing to a man sitting next you know I am not personally acquainted with him; now you come here to-morrow, at one o'clock, and I will tell you precisely what he is doing. Punctually at 1 o'clock he appeared, and I, after looking in my hat for a moment, greeted him that Mr. Sharpe was sitting in his back room in an easy chair, smoking a pipe and reading the TRIBUNE. He made a straight bolt for Mr. Sharpe's house and found him in exactly the position I had described. How did I do it? Why, easy enough. I saw Mr. Sharpe the evening before, and told him the fact I was in, and asked him to help me, which he did, by telling me what he was in the habit of doing at 1 o'clock, and promising to do it that day more." Thus the Professor told me the way other mediums did. He brought many more to prove it. He defied any medium to show him to apply any of the simple tests they did so glibly with a confidence.

Mr. Lombert made an excellent speech, filled with pertinent points, but in endeavoring to controvert the first speaker got badly mixed up in quoting Greek, and was obliged to own he had never studied it.

Speeches were made also by Mr. Clark, Mrs. Robert and others, and the Association adjourned till next Monday at the same hour, when the next meeting up will be given and the merits of the question debated.

EVENING DEBATE.

Sunday evening the debate on the reconstruction of China, which has excited so much interest at Metropolitan Hall, was ended by a discussion between Mrs. Ella C. Hubert, spiritualist, and the Rev. Dr. Robinson, orthodox. Each speaker was given five addresses of 20 minutes each.

Mrs. Hubert is well known as the Chaplain of the 1st Wisconsin Heavy Artillery (Live Regt.), and in consequence the Hall was full.

The discussion was a review of the old arguments which have been agitated for many centuries, and which are familiar to all. The matter they were presented, however, drew forth great applause. The knowledge of analysis in which Mrs. Hubert resided, more than compensated for the subtle logic of her opponent.

During the two hours it continued, there was not the slightest flagging of interest, and at the conclusion many expressions of regret were made that it could not be prolonged.

FATAL RAILROAD ACCIDENT IN PENNSYLVANIA.—We learn the following particulars of a fatal Railway accident from The Chester Daily (Pa.) Eagle of Aug. 19:

Spiritualism vs. Orthodox—Metropolitan Hall—The Mystery of Writing Mediums Explained—Speeches by Prof. Matterson, Dunn, Lambert and Others.

In consequence of the voluminous reports given to the meetings of the Spiritualists in Metropolitan Hall, by THE TRIBUNE, during the past three weeks, the hall on Sunday was filled to overflowing by a large audience.

Mr. Dunn, in opening the debate, said that he believed in the phenomena of Spiritualism. That he believed in the wonderful things said to be done by spirits were actually done by them, but that they were the spirits of Heaven, or wicked persons.

He gave a very beautiful argument, founded on philosophy, the bible, and the co-operative phenomena in Cyrus's day of persons possessed with devils (Balaam). This would, he observed, merit "possession with the spirit of one deceased."

His discourse showed a thorough knowledge of the ancient writers, and more especially the early fathers, whom he used a little too freely to be either rightly understood or appreciated.

He was answered by Prof. Matterson, Alluding to a phrenologist's theory as the substance of observation of having a sense nearly similar to that of an unspoken clergyman he did not wish anyone would think any loss of him on account of it. He would occupy their time in showing up the mystery of writing mediums. This he said he could do best by telling them a little story. "A few years ago," said he, "I was engaged in my shop, and a friend came in and began telling me some stories about a writing medium he had seen, and knowing I was a skeptic wanted my opinion. My opinion, said I, is that it is a humbug. How can this be, he inquired? Look here, I answered, pointing to a man sitting next you know I am not personally acquainted with him; now you come here to-morrow, at one o'clock, and I will tell you precisely what he is doing. Punctually at 1 o'clock he appeared, and I, after looking in my hat for a moment, greeted him that Mr. Sharpe was sitting in his back room in an easy chair, smoking a pipe and reading the TRIBUNE. He made a straight bolt for Mr. Sharpe's house and found him in exactly the position I had described. How did I do it? Why, easy enough. I saw Mr. Sharpe the evening before, and told him the fact I was in, and asked him to help me, which he did, by telling me what he was in the habit of doing at 1 o'clock, and promising to do it that day more." Thus the Professor told me the way other mediums did. He brought many more to prove it. He defied any medium to show him to apply any of the simple tests they did so glibly with a confidence.

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Table with multiple columns containing statistics and news snippets. Includes sections for 'AGENTS', 'PASSENGERS', 'PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS', 'WINDS', and 'DEATHS'. The table lists various categories such as 'Under 1 year', '1 to 2 years', '2 to 3 years', etc., and provides corresponding numerical data. It also includes a section for 'DEATHS' with names and locations, and a section for 'WINDS' with weather-related statistics.

Various small notices and advertisements, including 'FOR RENT', 'WANTED', and 'NOTICE'. Includes a notice for 'FOR RENT' in the City of New York, and a notice for 'WANTED' for a person named 'J. H. ...'. There are also several notices regarding business transactions and public information.

Eustis, Fla.
April 26th 1848

L. J. Reichmann Esq
Anderson, Ind

My dear Sir:

It gives
me much pleasure to acknowledge the
receipt of yours of the 22^d inst. It came
to hand this morning. I had often found
out where you were and am more
glad to be assured you are alive.
I hope you are doing well.

Your letter as published in the Wash-
ington Post is an admirable refutation
of the destardly and scandalous attacks
upon your character by J. M. H. Sumner
under the Cognomen "Harriet Hiss". The
"hiss" part of the cognomen is appropriate.
In it I ~~see~~ ^{note} the simons course of a
perpetrator and farce I can hear his
"hiss". Your letter is entirely appropri-
ate and well conceived and the tes-
timonials you submit are of the best
and are conclusive.

These letters are just two examples of the numerous correspondences sent to President Lincoln by African Americans seeking justice, freedom, and equality. Some letters were born out of desperation and pleas for help, while others celebrated the progress made in the fight against slavery and discrimination.

The letters reflect the diverse perspectives within the African American community. Some African Americans believed in peaceful dialogue and gradual

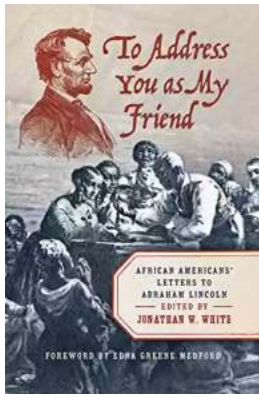
emancipation, while others called for more radical action to address the injustices they faced. However, the overwhelming sentiment in these letters is the unwavering desire to leave the chains of slavery behind and build a future of true equality for all.

President Lincoln recognized the significance of these letters and often personally responded to them. His responses demonstrated his empathy, understanding, and commitment to the cause of emancipation. While progress was slow, these letters and Lincoln's responses were essential building blocks in the struggle for civil rights in America.

The letters also served as a source of inspiration for future generations. They showcase the resilience and determination of African Americans during a time of great adversity. These words, penned under extreme circumstances, continue to shine a light on the indomitable human spirit and the power of hope.

Today, these letters are preserved as invaluable historical artifacts. They serve as a tangible reminder of the struggles faced by African Americans and their enduring quest for justice and equality. The voices of these brave individuals continue to resonate, inspiring us to confront the challenges of our own time and work towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

, African Americans' letters to Abraham Lincoln offer a powerful testament of hope and struggle. They provide a rare glimpse into the experiences and aspirations of African Americans during one of the most pivotal moments in American history. These letters capture the essence of bravery, determination, and resilience, and their impact reverberates to this day. As we reflect on the struggles of the past, let us be inspired by these letters to continue fighting for a future where justice, freedom, and equality prevail.



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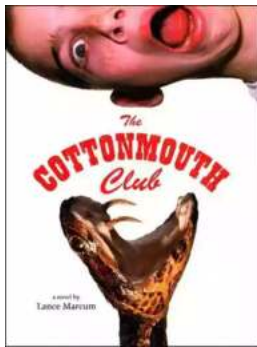
Many African Americans of the Civil War era felt a personal connection to Abraham Lincoln. For the first time in their lives, an occupant of the White House seemed concerned about the welfare of their race. Indeed, despite the tremendous injustice and discrimination that they faced, African Americans now had confidence to write to the president and to seek redress of their grievances. Their letters express the dilemmas, doubts, and dreams of both recently enslaved and free people in the throes of dramatic change. For many, writing Lincoln was a last resort. Yet their letters were often full of determination, making explicit claims to the rights of U.S. citizenship in a wide range of circumstances.

This compelling collection presents more than 120 letters from African Americans to Lincoln, most of which have never before been published. They offer unflinching, intimate, and often heart-wrenching portraits of Black soldiers' and civilians' experiences in wartime. As readers continue to think critically about Lincoln's image as the "Great Emancipator," this book centers African Americans' own voices to explore how they felt about the president and how they understood the possibilities and limits of the power vested in the federal government.



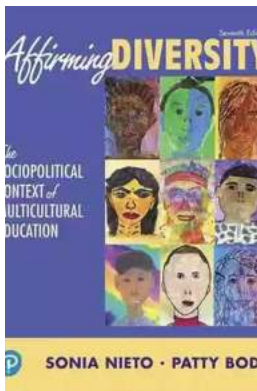
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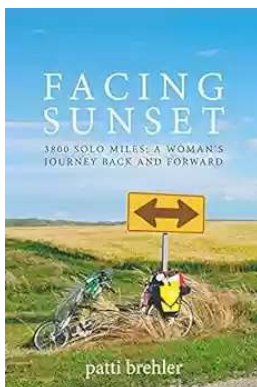
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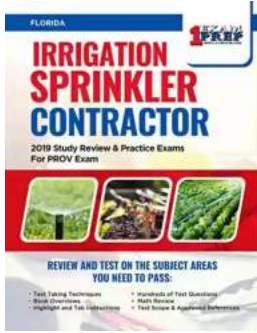
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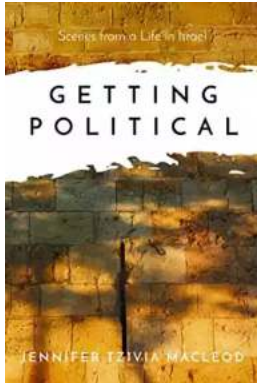
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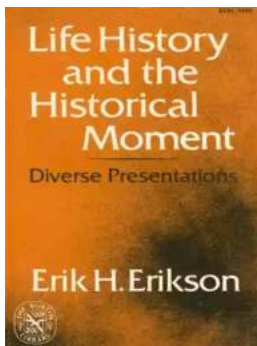
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