

**What does the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln
mean to the people of the United States?**

*Second Prize (University Students) – Dmitry Generalnitsky, St. Petersburg State Polytechnic
University (St. Petersburg)*

Tempus est optimus iudex

I write this not because I want to compete with some other fellow countrymen by such means and expect any victory or prize. These words I send in honor of one of the greatest and the most prominent leaders who happened to be the 16th President of the USA; who was intellectual like Yaroslav I, hard-working and charismatic like Peter the Great, victorious like Alexander I, liberal like Alexander II – and therefore so appealing to the Russian heart. I write *sui juris*, since I have no right to speak on behalf of “the people in the United States”, however wish to celebrate the Bicentennial at their side.

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President Lincoln left numerous gifts to the American Nation that should always be remembered. The major gift to be praised by descendants is liberty that is always worth fighting for. Feel the following words to understand the legacy and historical meaning of Abraham Lincoln: “*That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom [1]*”. It sounds like a proclamation of a new era, a new life that symbolically began for real with the start of that dead and gone calendar year. Lincoln’s words clearly indicate that the man lived (and died) for the sake of his citizens and made his country the outpost of democracy, then, thenceforward and forever.

Besides the glorious victories in the Civil War, abolition of slavery stated in the Emancipation Proclamation, famous 13th Amendment, President Lincoln’s tremendous

intelligence and wisdom gave the American Nation some other important gifts to enjoy, which may not be anyhow understated (refer to the words of Dr. Wayne C. Temple [2]).

First of such gifts is a well-developed network of excellent university education. As a university student I admire the fact that plenty of the world's best public universities are located in the USA. That's much owing to Morrill Land-Grant College Act signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on July 2, 1862 for the sake "liberal and practical education" [3]. The significance of such act becomes even more evident when we discover that Lincoln himself lacked formal education. Special "thank you" for UC Berkeley, which is my favorite U.S. university.

As a proud possessor of an "A-" on American History (Redwood High, 2002) I have to mention the significance of the second gift - Homestead Act of 1862. Despite all the historic cases of abuse, it opened the Great West for settlement for those who did not possess big money. It may have become factor of the Dust Bowl environmental disaster, but to my opinion – issues of improper agricultural practice are solely on the hands of private property owners. Homestead Act determined the path of evolution of the present American way of life and helped to spread population across the country, from sea to shining sea.

The third gift concerns banking activities. As a Bachelor of Finance I must say that the U.S. has one of the most sufficient banking systems (not going into the repeal of Glass-Steagall Act and subprime mortgage since it has nothing to do with President Lincoln). National Bank Act of 1863 (with amendments of 1864) was a great incentive for that – it authorized the issuance of bank notes by national banks creating "the nation's first truly national banking system" [4]. And guess who did it? No wonder that President Lincoln was the first president pictured on a circulating U.S. coin – rather a logical coincidence!

With all that we know about Abraham Lincoln long time after he passed away it is not difficult to answer the question: why Mr. Lincoln was the best U.S. President ever born. Simply because his life and his legacy can be found in almost everything around the contemporary American Nation – so free and so patriotic. And as people say, time is the best judge of greatness.

Bibliography

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4. Letter from Samuel P. Chase to William Pitt Fessenden.
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