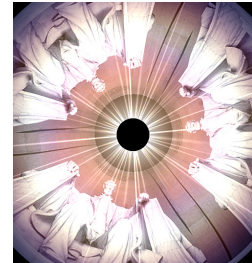


AN IMAGINARY INTERVIEW WITH ABE LINCOLN

After listening to a recent president 's rant, I wondered what would Ol' Abe might say. Of course, no living person knows the answer. So in a spirit of creative inquiry, I imagined how America's 16th president might answer some questions about issues we are facing.



Q: How's it feel to be a cultural icon?

A: Does anyone have a choice? The press has a way of molding people into darlings or devils. We're all victims of caricature to a degree. I try to remember all people have strengths and weaknesses. In America, the ordinary is often idealized. I have little control over what people idolize or condemn.

Q: Aren't you actually a racist? Many of your statements suggest that.

A: That word didn't exist when I was alive, but my own ideas of race have evolved. I started out pretty ignorant . . . it took time to learn that skin color is not related to human worth. One thing you must remember I was a politician – and politics is not unlike an auction. To some degree, I adapted to my audience.

Q: What was your biggest single regret?

A: Ah, there have been so many. However, isn't it wiser to feel thankful for blessings than to harbor regrets? Of course I wanted to keep the Union together and avoid civil war. Had there been some way to do that without bloodshed, I would have gladly given my life. Some folks argue I should have permitted more local autonomy. As I've said many times before, that would have led to fragmentation. The European powers would have gobbled up the U.S. and our experiment in freedom would have vanished prematurely . . .

Q: You use the word "democracy", yet didn't hesitate to enact many draconian measures . . .

A: Now listen here, you whipper-snapper! Running a nation is not a dainty

business. Anyone too concerned with niceties can't stay in power. War means killing people. And no nation can achieve victory over another if it is too disunited. The measures I enacted were necessary at the time.

Q: So what do you think about America's policies today?

A: Hmm, I knew that question was coming . . . Well, America's war in Iraq was pre-emptive and based on deliberate disinformation. It was an invasion for oil and planted the seed for even more conflicts. However twisted America's leaders might be, the basic vision of our forefathers stands right. We need to re-commit to that vision.

Q: Some people criticize you for not being adequately religious. Now that you're dead, could you finally set the record straight?

A: Well, since I don't have to worry about getting re-elected I can speak frankly. I do believe in Pure Reason, but find most religions far too sectarian and provincial. They're like petty town elders seeing things only from their own narrow ways. That sort of vision leads to the Dark Ages. We must look at things with a spirit of open inquiry without neglecting our core beliefs.

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