

Emma G. Dukes

Dr. Jamin Wells

84803 Honors Seminar: Topic VII Abe & Me

07 December 2023

Abe and Me: How Do We Relate?

This past semester has been an adventure for sure and it was full of very eye opening classes all around. When Dr. Evans reached out to me the week before classes about a new seminar, I was excited, for sure, but I had no idea what to expect. History has been a favorite subject of mine since middle school so I jumped onto the opportunity to finish my Honors seminars and work in a history class with a major that does not call for an additional class. So, I am going to reflect on the understanding I have of Lincoln.

From the very beginning, I have stated that I do not know too much about Lincoln so this class was very going to influence how I form an opinion about him. Our first lecture was with Mr. Satterwhite and he discussed Lincoln that I already had a vague understanding of. We mentioned his two major recognitions, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address. We broke apart the Gettysburg Address and analyzed different portions and there meaning as a whole, “. . . that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain - that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that the government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.” is one portion we focused on. I believe that this was a great starting point of the semester because if you were like me and

did not know anything about Lincoln, now you knew some of the basics. Now, most of the class was on an even playing field when it came to the broad knowledge of Abraham Lincoln.

Our next meeting, we had two lectures in one and I felt like the first part of the lecture was a little disconnected from what we were trying to accomplish. It felt rushed and I did not see how the religion aspect that Dr. Jack Giddens was lecturing on related to Lincoln. It did not give me any greater look into his presidency, who he was, or tie in with a connection to me. Dr. Jamin Wells' lecture was a little different. I like statistics, statistics are proven and easy to remember. He gave us hard facts on what the United States looked like under Lincoln's presidency. This was one of my favorite classes because I like these facts, seeing just exactly what Lincoln did for the entire country. Dr. Wells' lecture had pictures and labels to keep us engaged which actually enabled me to learn more because staring at words and listening to a person say the exact thing on the screen is a bore.

"Therein the 'United Colonies' were declared to be 'free and independent States;' but even then the object plainly was not to declare their independence of one another or of the Union, but directly the contrary, as their mutual pledge and their mutual action before, at the time, and afterwards abundantly show." is a quote from Lincoln's July 4th Address of Congress that David Ramsey used as one of his talking points. He used this quote to show us some of the tactics that Lincoln used in his political endeavors. Lincoln loved to use the Declaration of Independence as a support piece to his speeches and as a reference source. Which is kinda cool because I do the same thing at least in some way. My favorite book character, I will not tell you who, but he was my password for the longest time across the board. I use my favorite book

character as a reference source to remember my login just as Lincoln had used the Declaration of Independence to his speeches.

Since declaring legal studies as a minor so many people have asked me whether or not I plan on going to law school and right now that is not a part of my future career path but it is definitely a choice. So, Mr. Richard Cohen coming in with his perspective of Lincoln was one of my favorite classes to date. Mr. Cohen also showed us there that there are indeed two sides of every coin and Lincoln himself had two sides. When I was reflecting on that it reminded me of what one of my friends said to me when I was working in the service industry. She said to me that there are definitely two sides of every person who works in service, at least here in the United States. The first side is the people pleasing side, the side we use to get more tips. On the other side we have sort of our true selves, the people that do not have to please the people we are surrounded by. The Dred Scott case was also mentioned during this session which was an interesting case to learn about especially with how our political climate is today. While we do not bluntly see the scale of this racism as saying “African Americans were not citizens and did not deserve it” but we do still see forms of racism.

Dr. Kelly Carr’s lecture will definitely impact my future in college and out in the workforce. While I may have already taken a speech class, in the honors program and in my majors, I am going to have to speak in front of crowds. The whole process she outlined for us will enable us to reach the right target in terms of laying out a speech. It also brought some clarity to the speeches Lincoln gave. The first thing was that Lincoln’s Lyceum speech was a place yes, but it was also a type of deliverance for speeches that was regularly held. Lincoln was also invited to this place to give his speech on the current political climate, mob killings, and it

gave Lincoln a footing for future speeches that he would deliver. This reminds me of the conferences that we have with the honors program in presenting our thesis. Which I will more than likely use Dr. Carr's methods to construct.

For the first few lectures the Lincoln-Douglas debates were mentioned there was no real clarification and I thought they were talking about Frederick Douglass and not Stephen Douglas so it was a real shock to me when I realized that there were two separate Douglas' that had significance in Lincoln's life. Dr. Adam Blood was a fresh new perspective that was really interesting. We saw Lincoln the conniving debater. Lincoln was very sneaky in the way that he pursued Stephen Douglas in terms of debating on the terms of slavery. The type of pettiness that Lincoln had construed to spite Douglas. Lincoln was sneaky in the beginning to provoke Douglas, waiting for Douglas to be gone before attacking his rhetoric. In previous discussions we know that Lincoln, at first, was not very vocal about his disapproval for slavery. When he did finally get Douglas to agree on the debates, Lincoln came up with a very smart method of debating, a very advantageous style of debating, one that worked wonders for him. From debate to debate, he would see what was popular and work it more into his speech so that he would gain traction over Douglas. Though, in this instance, I think that I relate more to Douglas, not on the topic, of course, but in the actual act of debating. Douglas got tired of debating and gave up towards the end and let Lincoln win and I would too if I had to debate for up to three hours.

When thinking of Lincoln, I definitely do not think of him as a family man and I did not even know that he had children, I had assumed so because it was typical for that time period but I was not certain. The more that we got into Lincoln's life the more empathy I held for him. No parent should have to bury their child, Lincoln buried two. He also had a turbulent relationship

with his father which I can relate to. Sometimes it is hard to get along with your parents when they want you to think and act a certain way. Lincoln and I were very similar in that aspect, it was not quite the same situation but there are some similarities between the cases. Thomas Lincoln did not want his son to stray from the conformity of small town Kentucky just as my dad does not want me to stray from the status quo of small town Alabama. Abraham and I were supposed to stay within the guides set universally for our towns but we both went against that. Lincoln went on to study law and become president and I am studying to be a social worker. Both of our fathers disapprove of our career and yet we are doing it anyways, I think that takes a whole lot of courage.

Music is a great part of my life, I could spend hours listening to music. In fact, I prefer to listen to music when I study and during the mundane tasks that I complete everyday. I start my day with music and end my day with music. Now while our taste in music is completely different, I do feel like I connect with Lincoln in terms of having passion for music. For a while I did try and play the piano and I could have been very good if I had the motivation but I enjoy listening more than performing. When we were able to get out of the classroom but still learn about Lincoln was a real tide turner. To be honest leading up to that presentation, I was getting bored of the class. It was lecture after lecture and discussion post after discussion post and it was just blending in with all of my other classes. This presentation made it stand out and reminded me that this seminar is an interdisciplinary course. This music performance was amazing all of the different students, people just like us, also learning about Lincoln through their performance. What still baffles me is that Abraham's mother was only mentioned once by our lecturers and that was through one of the songs. Musicals are also something I enjoy, I was able to see Wicked

at the Fox theater a few years back and it was an amazing experience. Now Wicked is a little different than what Lincoln enjoyed but still we have a connection through the arts. I did not think that I would like musicals but I went in with an open mind and really did end up enjoying myself. I also think that a lot of people can connect with Lincoln this way and I am glad we did end up adding it into our exhibit. I feel like music enriches the mind and soul and it helps people out a lot. That it gives people an outlet either for making or listening to music. I do think that next time this style of presentation should move up a few sessions just so that it would keep us interested and enjoying the class.

Before constructing this paper, I really did not think that I had any real connection with Lincoln. But then I started writing down what was accomplished in each lecture and I reflected on it, which was the purpose of the assignment. I was able to find connections, connections that I was sure I would not be able to put together, but there are connections. Somehow a man that has been long since dead and is in no way related to me has connections with my life.