

## **Oregon Lincoln Bicentennial Town Halls, February 2008 through 2009**

The Oregon Lincoln Bicentennial Commission will make available to communities, schools, libraries and non-profit organizations, an opportunity to host a Town Hall event to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. The Town Halls are not lecture series, but rather an opportunity to have a community discussion around topics and issues that Lincoln faced in his own time and which are still relevant today

These are the topics which will form the basis for town hall discussions marking the bicentennial celebration of the birth of Abraham Lincoln.

The topics are intended to invoke a public discourse about Lincoln, his times and the impact he had and still has on America.

Topics:

1) ***Lincoln and Race:***

- Native Americans
- African Americans
- Attitude about the Mexican War

2) ***Lincoln, Oregon and the West***

- Lincoln links to Oregon
- Homestead Act
- Morrill Act (land-grant)
- Pacific Railroad
- Native Americans

3) ***Lincoln, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence***

- Lincoln , the "letter of the law" vs. the "spirit of the law"
- Resolving the tension between the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence
- Failure of compromise
- Lincoln and the Supreme Court
- violation of the Constitution (suspension of habeas corpus)

4) ***Lincoln: Defining the "New Nation"***

- Did Lincoln bring about the Civil War?
- What was Lincoln fighting for?
- The Gettysburg address, a statement about a "new" nation?

5) ***Lincoln, the man***

- family influences
- Character
- Religion and "theology"
- Education
- Lincoln in literature
- Abiding qualities (attitudes?) and changing qualities (attitudes?)

6) ***Lincoln, leadership and power***

- Exercise of power in a democracy
- Character
- Lincoln the politician

-Relationships with the press, the Congress and the Cabinet

7) *Lincoln and the 21st Century*

-Can Lincoln speak to the issues of the 21st century?

-What is most important and applicable about Lincoln to today's society and government?

The OLBC will make available Steve Holgate a Lincoln actor who renders a "Lincoln Press Conference" to open the event. Dressed as Lincoln, Steve does a 20-25 minute recitation of what "he's been up to these past few years" and then does a Q&A. Doug Tracy, a musician, has researched songs from the era, such as Lincoln's 1860 campaign song and performs these at the town hall events.

The community discussion will be led by Lincoln scholars Richard Etulain and Elliott Trommald. They will do a brief introductory set of remarks about the topic chosen and then draw the audience into the discussion

As these town hall events are open public discussions, they will meet the goals of the national Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission (ALBC) in increasing the knowledge and awareness of Lincoln in the US; encourages public participation in bicentennial events. They will also increase historical literacy, research, scholarship and understanding of Lincoln through the role that the graduate students will play and the ensuing programs and will serve as a catalyst for conversation and diverse perspectives.

Endorsement by the ALBC of these town halls will offer allow greater promotional opportunities for the programs both in materials the OLBC will distribute and by being listed on the ALBC web site