

# Father (Abraham) forgive them

Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States, was born on Sunday, Feb. 12, 1809, at “Sinking Spring Farm,” near Hodgenville, Kentucky—40 miles from Louisville.

He was named for his paternal grandfather, who was killed by an Indian, “not in battle,” as the president later told the story, “but by stealth, when he (Lincoln’s grandfather) was laboring to open a farm in the forest.” Lincoln’s father, Thomas (a young boy at the time) was about to be taken captive by the same warrior, when Thomas’ older brother, Mordecai “jumped over the fence — ran to the fort,” and shot the man dead, at a distance of 160 paces.

Mordecai aimed at a silver half-moon medallion the Indian had been wearing. The warrior was found dead the next day. Had Mordecai been unsuccessful in rescuing his younger brother Thomas, there would not have been any Great Emancipator or Savior of the Union a generation later, when the nation needed him most.

“The story of his (the grandfather’s) death by the Indians, and of Uncle Mordecai, then fourteen years old, killing one of the Indians, is the legend more strongly than all others imprinted on my mind and memory,” stated President Lincoln, many years later.

The president went on to recount that the slaying of Thomas Lincoln’s father (Abraham Lincoln’s grandfather) was the transformative event in Thomas’ life. His father’s death diminished the family’s earning potential, and as the youngest son, Thomas found himself in a precarious position.

His brother Mordecai, having

saved Thomas’ life, lost interest in his brother’s fortunes. “Owing to my father being left an orphan at the age of six years, in poverty and in a new country (Kentucky), he became a wholly uneducated man,” wrote President Abraham Lincoln about his own father, Thomas.

Much of the poverty that plagued Thomas, Abraham’s mother Nancy, step-mother Sarah and sister Sarah in the president’s early years, and to a large extent, throughout his parents’ entire lives, can be attributed to this single, tragic event. If anyone had a right to nurse a grudge against Native Americans or hold them responsible for all the things he was deprived of in those formative years, it would be Abraham Lincoln.

However; to his credit, he did not. He chose the high road, instead.

President Lincoln lived out the message he brilliantly articulated in his Second Inaugural Address, “with malice toward none, with charity for all.” He did the walk as well as he did the talk.

The proof is that when Lincoln was in a position of authority; on at least two occasions, he dealt with Native Americans fairly and openly. The first instance was during the Black Hawk War of 1832, when Lincoln (serving as captain of a local Illinois militia composed of his friends from New Salem) came across an old man who had been left behind by his own tribal members. Lincoln ordered his men not to harass nor harm the Native American man.

The second instance was 30 years later, in his treatment of the 303 Dakota prisoners already convicted of crimes against white settlers, in the aftermath of the U.S-Dakota War.

As president, Lincoln ordered the death sentences reversed for 265 of those prisoners. In doing so, he risked alienating Minnesota’s military and political support he desperately needed to win the Civil War.

Displaying enormous moral courage, Lincoln did what was morally right, not what was either popular or expedient, pointing out that “I cannot hang men for votes.” Modern politicians should follow his example.

Lincoln was not a perfect human being. None of us are. He made mistakes, as we all do. Civil War Indian policy (most of which Lincoln inherited from his predecessors) left much to be desired.

But to remove or deface Lincoln’s statues, or call his policies into serious question 160 years after the fact, without adequate proof, in an unfair effort to discredit him, in order to appease current “cancel culture” advocates, is, in this author’s view, shameful and inappropriate.

Lincoln was assassinated on Good Friday, 1865. He lost his own life, due in large part for his efforts to improve the lives of others, namely the 4 million slaves he freed, with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and final Union victory in the Civil War.

He should not have to be tried again and crucified in the court of today’s public opinion— especially for crimes he didn’t commit.

I am reminded of the words spoken from the cross on the first Good Friday; words that can apply to Lincoln’s treatment at the hands of the “cancel culturists” as well, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

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My View