

IT COULD HAPPEN...

My name is Abraham Lincoln. I was President of the United States during a turbulent time in this country's history. My primary concern was to keep the Union intact. However, I was deeply troubled by the way people of color...slaves...were being treated.

I put my money where my mouth was, so to speak. On January 1, 1863, in the midst of the American Civil War, I issued an executive order called the Emancipation Proclamation. It freed the slaves in the rebellious states.

I proclaimed my passions again on November 19, 1863, in what has been called my Gettysburg Address. I delivered the speech to consecrate that sacred battlefield. In my address, I said that this nation was dedicated to the proposition that all men were created equal. I believed it then, and I believe it now.

I shepherded the 13th Amendment to the Constitution through Congress in 1865, before I was brutally assassinated on April 15th of that year. The amendment formally abolished slavery.

I pondered how far former slaves could go once they had obtained their freedom. Maybe a person of color could even become president of these United States. It could happen.....

My name is Martin Luther King, Jr. I was a strong proponent of nonviolent opposition to those who were abridging the civil rights of people of color. I had always admired President Lincoln, and his support of African-American people. I put my money where my mouth was, too.

On August 28, 1963, I gave my "I had a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., during a march on the capitol. I noted that five score years before, President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, giving hope to the former slaves. Yet, people of color were still not free.

I hoped that someday people would be judged by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin. I could not rest with this lack of concern for the civil rights of African-American people.

In 1965, I led a march from Selma, Alabama to the steps of the capitol in Montgomery, Alabama. We were protesting segregation in a nonviolent way. Nevertheless, we were attacked by state troopers, because we refused to disperse. When will this end, I thought sadly?

Three years later, I was brutally assassinated on April 4, 1968. I have been told that I inspired generations afterwards with my words and deeds. I wondered if, someday, a person of color could even be elected President of the United States. It could happen....

My name is Barack Hussein Obama. I was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961, to a Caucasian-American mother and a Kenyan father. Indeed, I am an African-American.

Two of my greatest heroes growing up were Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. Their words and deeds inspired me to become a constitutional lawyer, then a senator; and to have aspirations for higher things.

In 2008, I put my money where my mouth was, too. I ran for President of the United States. I believed it could happen. It was a tough battle, and I encountered much opposition along the way. Everything about me was challenged, including my place of birth.

Yet, on November 4, 2008, after all the votes were counted, my wife Michelle said to me: "Barack, you've just been elected the 44th president of the United States."

I looked upward to thank God, and I thought I saw Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. give each other a fist bump.

They thought it could happen, and it did.

Beth-Ann Erlic Herschaft
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