



PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S COTTAGE
AT THE SOLDIERS' HOME

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President Lincoln's Cottage Opens Exhibit on Modern Slavery *"Can You Walk Away?" Explores Human Trafficking in the United States*

Washington, D.C. – President Lincoln's Cottage, in partnership with Polaris Project, opened *Can You Walk Away? Modern Slavery: Human Trafficking in the United States* February 17, 2012 in the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center. The exhibit is part of a year-long commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of Lincoln developing the Emancipation Proclamation at President Lincoln's Cottage. *Can You Walk Away?* bridges the perceived gap between slavery past and present, and highlights the challenges and perceptions of slavery in America today. *Can You Walk Away?* opened in February 2012 and will remain on view through August 31, 2013.

"The Cottage has an obligation to the public to explore the modern impact of Lincoln's presidency and ideas, especially ideas developed right here at the Cottage. It's outrageous that slavery is a growing problem in our country, especially when the 'shackles' of slavery were legally abolished nearly 150 years ago. Slavery is a problem in our world today that requires big thinking and direct action, just like it did in Lincoln's time," said Erin Carlson Mast, Director of President Lincoln's Cottage.

Can You Walk Away? uses powerful imagery, video footage and compelling statistics to inspire people to consider Lincoln's ideas about slavery, discover the harsh reality of slavery today, and take direct action to help eliminate this problem. Human trafficking is a \$32 billion-a-year industry and is one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world. Some 12 million people are held against their will in compelled service across the globe. President Lincoln's Cottage is the authentic resource for understanding Lincoln's perspective on slavery and his development of the Emancipation Proclamation and this exhibit connects his bold and courageous ideas with the modern abolitionist movement.

The exhibit has garnered significant attention, most notably from former First Lady Laura Bush who stated, "This is the ideal year to visit President Lincoln's Cottage, the very place where Lincoln nurtured and developed the Emancipation Proclamation 150 years ago. The Cottage's current exhibit, *Can You Walk Away?*, provides an invaluable lens through which the public can view our country's ongoing struggle with slavery – both in the historical context and in present day trafficking. Exhibits like this are evidence of the way historic places can shape the way we live in the present."

President Lincoln's Cottage has produced this exhibit in partnership with Polaris Project. Named after the North Star that guided slaves to freedom along the Underground Railroad, Polaris Project is transforming the way that individuals and communities respond to the crime of human trafficking. The organization operates the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, our country's central 24-hour human trafficking hotline (1-888-373-7888). Polaris Project, which is headquartered in Washington DC, also advocates for stronger federal and state laws, builds the capacity of communities to fight trafficking, and provides vital services to victims of trafficking.

"We are honored and humbled to be partnering with President Lincoln's Cottage on this powerful exhibit. Sadly, forms of slavery did not end in this country after the Emancipation Proclamation. When we show people the realities of what victims of human trafficking and modern-day slavery face every day, it is nearly impossible to walk away without joining the growing movement to fight these human rights abuses. We hope visitors to this exhibit will understand that they can be an important part of the solution," said Bradley Myles, Executive Director and CEO of the Polaris Project.

Video segments were contributed by Worldwide Documentaries, Inc. - *Not My Life*, and The mtvU Against Our Will Campaign.

President Lincoln lived in the Cottage at the Soldiers' Home from June–November of 1862, 1863 and 1864—totaling one quarter of his presidency. He was living here when he drafted the preliminary version of the Emancipation Proclamation and deliberated critical issues of the Civil War. Since the Cottage opened to the public in 2008, tens of thousands of visitors have engaged in conversations on liberty, justice, and equality, through innovative guided tours, forward-thinking exhibits and quality educational programs. Hours of operation: Tours on the hour, 7 days a week. Visitor Center open 9:30am-4:30pm Mon-Sat, 10:30am-4:30pm Sunday. For more information on President Lincoln's Cottage, visit: www.lincolncottage.org

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately-funded non-profit organization, works to save America's historic places. For more information visit: www.PreservationNation.org.

To report a tip in the United States or connect with U.S. anti-trafficking services, community members can call The National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline at: 1-888-373-7888.

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