

Contact: Curtis Harris
202-688-3729
charris@savingplaces.org

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Groundbreaking Exhibit on Lincoln's Immigration Policy Opens

The 16th President's immigration policy examined alongside current issues.

Washington, D.C. - President Lincoln's Cottage launched *American by Belief*, a new exhibit that will bring to light Lincoln's views and policies on immigration. Callie Hawkins, Associate Director of Programs at the Cottage, stated, "To our knowledge, *American by Belief* is the first exhibit to focus specifically on Abraham Lincoln's beliefs on immigration."

On July 4, 1864, as Lincoln and his family moved to the Cottage for their final summer in residence, the 16th president signed into law An Act to Encourage Immigration. Historian Jason Silverman, author of the newly published *Lincoln and the Immigrant*, described this act as "the first, last, and only major law in American history to encourage immigration." Silverman continued, "Abraham Lincoln viewed immigration as crucial to the destiny of the United States and he welcomed immigrants to the shores of the United States as their new home."

Hawkins echoed Silverman's statements on the importance of Lincoln's work on immigration: "By exploring immigration in Lincoln's time and our own, *American by Belief* shows that while the nuances of immigration related issues have evolved over time, the tension over these issues has been ever present."

Although Lincoln's signature immigration law doesn't stand in the popular memory as grand as the Gettysburg Address or the Emancipation Proclamation, "it's no less important," asserts Erin Carlson Mast, Executive Director of President Lincoln's Cottage. "The issues Lincoln grappled with while living here are the predecessors of what we face today. Huge strides were made here, yes, but even Lincoln recognized more work had to be done to achieve our nation's ideals-this is a hopeful setting for this exhibit."



American by Belief exhibit. Photo: © President Lincoln's Cottage, courtesy President Lincoln's Cottage.



Using a hands-on map, visitors show the journey their families made immigrating to the United States.
Photo: © President Lincoln's Cottage, courtesy President Lincoln's Cottage.

President Lincoln's Cottage, "the Cradle of the Emancipation Proclamation," is located on the grounds of the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, DC. While living here for more than a quarter of his presidency, Abraham Lincoln bonded with soldiers and veterans, made crucial decisions about the Civil War, and, most notably, developed the Emancipation Proclamation his first summer in residence. His daily commute put him in regular contact with wounded soldiers and self-emancipated men, women, and children. Today, the site offers an intimate, never-before-seen view of Abraham Lincoln's presidency and private life, and new perspectives on the influential ideas Lincoln developed while living here. Hours of operation: The Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center is open 9:30am-4:30pm Monday-Saturday and 10:30am-4:30pm Sunday. Cottage tours are on the hour, 7 days a week. For more information on President Lincoln's Cottage, visit: www.lincolncottage.org or call 202-829-0436.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately-funded non-profit organization, works to save America's historic places. President Lincoln's Cottage is a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more information, visit: www.preservationnation.org.