



# THE COTTAGE COURIER

Vol. 14

www.lincolncottage.org

Winter 2012

## From the Director



Dear Friends,

Our winter newsletter is the one we most look forward to creating for you each year. It marks the anniversary of our opening to the public on Presidents Day (four years ago in 2008), Abraham Lincoln's birthday on February 12 (203 years ago in 1809), and gives us an opportunity to share our accomplishments from the past year as well as our plans for the coming year with all of you. The past year was, perhaps remarkably, our best on record, for which I thank

my extraordinary team. We are here because we believe in the truth, power, and potential of President Lincoln's Cottage. Conventional wisdom holds that it is nearly impossible to best your grand-opening year, and yet in 2011 we had five record-breaking months of visitation, increased school visitation by 59%, had our best budget year ever, expanded our online engagement by 55%, and enjoyed a tremendous amount of national, regional, and local press. We could not have done this without your generous contributions to and support of the site this year. Thank you.

For President Lincoln's Cottage, 2012 is arguably the most important year of the Civil War Sesquicentennial. We mark the 150th anniversary of Abraham, Mary, and Tad Lincoln moving to the Soldiers' Home for their first season in residence, the passage of the DC Emancipation Act, the Dakota Uprising, and of course Lincoln developing his Emancipation Proclamation, which he released on September 22nd while living at the Cottage. This year also marks the 150th anniversary of Lincoln being assigned a permanent security detail, the Presidential Guard, which was a response to the very real threats to his safety caused by his determination to live here at the Soldiers' Home.

As the authentic place where Lincoln dealt with so many historic, ground-breaking events, such as the Emancipation Proclamation, it seemed only natural that as part of our commemorations in 2012, we look at the issue of slavery today. On February 17th we will open our newest special exhibition, "Can You Walk Away?" that is designed to challenge perceptions on slavery in America today and raises awareness of a growing humanitarian crisis--modern slavery. The exhibit gives voice to survivors of slavery and modern-day abolitionists, and provides different ways for our visitors to take action. This new exhibit would not have



*A glimpse of the new exhibit, Can You Walk Away?*

been possible without our newest partner, Polaris Project. Named for the North Star that guided slaves towards freedom along the Underground Railroad, Polaris Project is the leading anti-human trafficking NGO in the United States. It is no coincidence that many modern abolitionists look to the past for inspiration. In February 1861, Lincoln made a speech in Independence Hall in which he reflected on the principles that united us as a country. He concluded to the assembly that the great idea of the Republic was that of, "giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time." The problem of slavery today is different in ways that may startle you, and yet, fundamentally, it is about the same issue Lincoln found so troubling--the violation of our unalienable right to freedom.

We wanted to bring you something a bit different in this newsletter, so in lieu of an article, we are sharing an interview with Bradley Myles, the Executive Director of Polaris Project, to reveal a bit more about Polaris Project's work and how relevant it is to our view of the past. As always, I would love to hear your thoughts about the newsletter, our upcoming exhibit, or any of our other programs and initiatives.

*Erin Mast*

Erin Mast, Director

### UPCOMING PROGRAMS

March 15, 2012 with *Stephanie McCurry*

6:00pm Reception (\$10) / 6:30pm Lecture (\$10)

Tickets: sahand\_miraminy@nthp.org or (202) 829-0436

More Info: [www.lincolncottage.org](http://www.lincolncottage.org)

*The 2011-2012 Cottage Conversation Series is made possible by the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation*

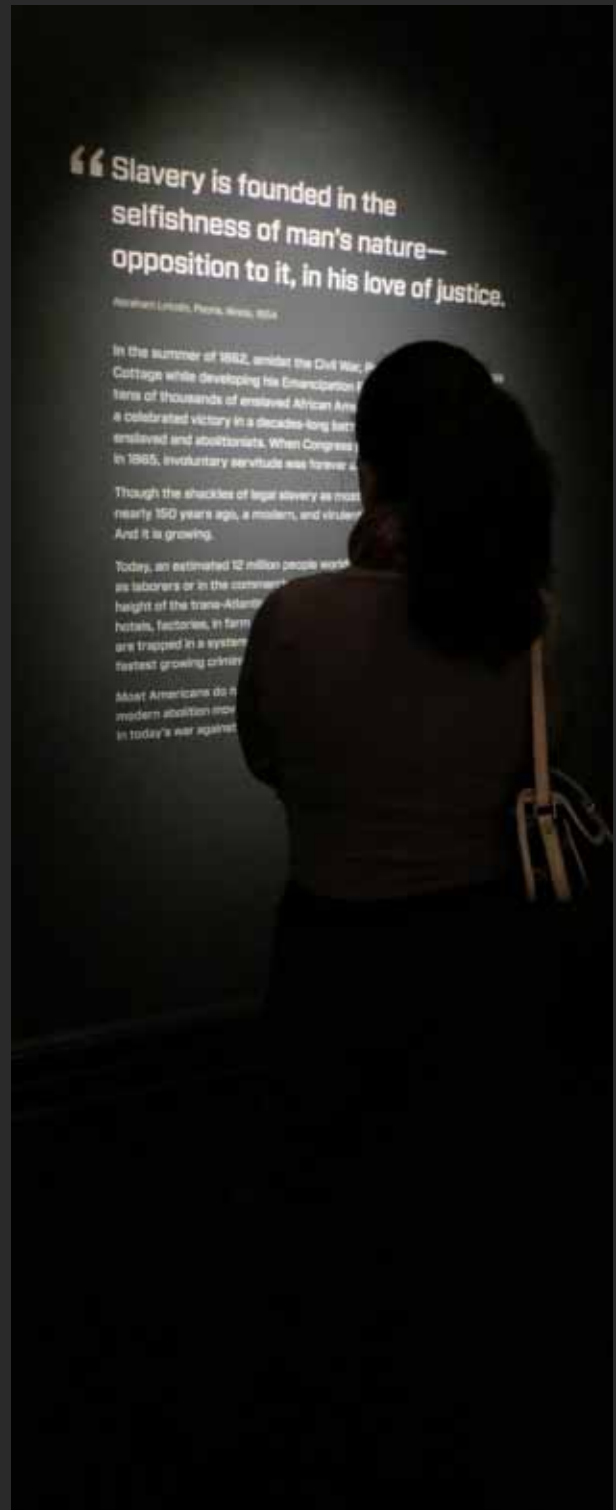
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# CAN YOU WALK AWAY?

## MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES

This special exhibit will challenge perceptions of slavery in America today and raise awareness of a growing humanitarian crisis. By posing the question, "Can you walk away?" this exhibit will inspire people to engage with the modern abolitionist movement and to see that slavery is an ongoing issue that requires big thinking and direct action, just as it did in Lincoln's time.



# FEBRUARY 17, 2012



## SURVIVOR GOODS NOW SOLD AT THE MUSEUM STORE

Within the past decade, the Fair Trade movement has gained increased recognition. Today, the words Fair Trade can be seen stamped on products in markets, shops and even online. But what exactly does this term refer to? Who does it benefit? How does it relate to President Lincoln?

Every day, hundreds of thousands of individuals are forced to work in unhealthy and dangerous conditions at a pay rate that is far below modern legal minimum wages. The Fair Trade movement seeks to solve this problem by promoting higher wages and better working conditions for the producers of products commonly imported into developed nations.

Some of the most important Fair Trade items are those made by survivors of modern day slavery and human trafficking. Through Fair Trade, these victims now have a chance to protect their communities from slavery and violence through education and employment. In honor of President Lincoln's legacy, the Cottage is taking a very active role in selling Fair Trade merchandise, including survivor made goods. These items can be purchased in the Museum Store or on the online store. Each Fair Trade product comes with a brief description card about the company or organization and the artisans that created the product.

President Lincoln believed that all people could be self-made by having the opportunity to achieve financial success through their own free will. In the spirit of Lincoln's belief, the Cottage is proud to sell Fair Trade products in our Museum Store.

*Looking for a behind-the-scenes experience?*



Experience an specialty tour at President Lincoln's Cottage with your friends or family! Our **Premium** and **Director's Tours** are designed for those who are looking for an intimate, behind the scenes look at Lincoln, his beloved Cottage, and the historic grounds of the Soldier's Home. Take advantage of this unique opportunity!

To schedule your Premium or Director's Tour of the Cottage, please email [sahand\\_miraminy@nthp.org](mailto:sahand_miraminy@nthp.org) or call (202) 829-0436 x31232.

# The Modern Abolitionist Movement

Callie Hawkins Interviews Bradley Myles, Executive Director and CEO, Polaris Project



Bradley Myles currently serves as Polaris Project's Executive Director and CEO. He has been working on combating the issue of human trafficking for the past ten years since 2002, and he is regarded as one of the leading advocates in the anti-trafficking field. In his current role at Polaris Project, he is responsible for overseeing all the programmatic, financial, and operational areas of the organization, which includes a staff of 45 individuals, and an annual budget exceeding \$3 million. Mr. Myles works on all areas of Polaris Project's comprehensive approach to fighting human trafficking, including overseeing the direct victims services efforts of local offices in Washington, D.C. and New Jersey; supervising the policy team's advocacy initiatives at the federal and state levels, and providing strategic oversight for Polaris Project's operation of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) hotline.

Mr. Myles has provided consultation, training, and technical assistance on anti-trafficking strategies to hundreds of audiences, including human trafficking task forces and coalitions across the nation, government agencies, federal and local law enforcement, U.S. Members of Congress, media, service providers, and foreign delegations. He has also been a key advocate in bridging the national anti-trafficking program areas of multiple federal government agencies in the U.S. Departments of State, Homeland Security, Justice, and Health and Human Services. Mr. Myles serves as Polaris Project's primary liaison to the Humanity United-funded national coalition entitled the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST), the U.S. Department of Justice National Advisory Group on trafficking, and the U.S. Department of Justice-funded Washington, D.C. Human Trafficking Task Force. He holds degrees in Psychology and Political Science from Stanford University.

*Callie Hawkins is Curator of Education at President Lincoln's Cottage and the creator of Can You Walk Away? Ms. Hawkins initiated the partnership between President Lincoln's Cottage and Polaris Project in February 2011. Recently she had the opportunity to sit down with Bradley Myles and to discuss the work Polaris Project does to fight modern slavery.*

**CALLIE HAWKINS:** In your opinion, what is Polaris Project's biggest challenge in spreading awareness of human trafficking?

**BRAD MYLES:** Well I think that we're still at a stage in the fight against modern-day slavery where raising awareness and changing people's consciousness of the issue is very critical and very important. I think that one challenge is that the issue is a dark and uncomfortable issue for some people and sometimes they are not in a place to hear what may be going on in their community and what may be going on in places close to home. And so that angle of presenting the information in a way that people are able to

hear it and be receptive to it, I think is a challenge.

I think another challenge is that there are myths and misconceptions about what people think modern-day slavery or human trafficking is and they may have some predefined notions in their head where they think that it must require movement and they think that it's kind of like smuggling. Or they think that it only happens in far away countries, in Cambodia and India, and they don't think about the ways that it might happen closer to home. Or they think that it must require some kind of physical violence so they're looking for whips and chains or whatever else. So getting over those myths and misconceptions and getting people to have an accurate lens on what the issue really is is also a challenge. But I think the good news is that once people do learn and are in a place to hear it, more often than not once their awareness is raised, they get very outraged. They want to do something about

it. They feel this sense of injustice that this issue flies in the face of what we believe in, in our core values as a country. And so if you can get over the hurdle of the initial awareness, then you're in a place where people really want to act and get activated in this movement and that's a really exciting place to be in with somebody.

**CALLIE:** I agree. As I've been working on this exhibit for President Lincoln's Cottage, it's astonishing to me the number of people that are content to believe that slavery ended with the 13th Amendment. But once you probe and go a little bit deeper, they are astounded that this is something that persists.

**BRAD:** I think you're right, and I think that piercing that belief that slavery ended with the 13th Amendment and the Emancipation Proclamation is an interesting journey to be on because you're basically telling somebody that [what] they held to be true for quite a long time actually isn't true. So then they

have to go through their own process of “Do I feel duped?” “Why wasn’t I given complete information?” “Why didn’t I know this?” Or maybe they take it the other way which is, “Why should I trust you that you’re even telling me this because maybe you’re wrong and it did end.” And so there are all these different emotional and intellectual factors that are at play. But the truth of the matter is, whether people are in a place to hear it or not, these forms of bondage, and these forms of control, and these forms of making people feel like they have to do something or else and that they can’t get away or they can’t stop have continued past the 13th Amendment and past the Emancipation Proclamation. ...

Throughout the late 1800’s and the early 1900’s and all the way into modern day and now with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, there’s this whole movement against modern slavery and what’s being called human trafficking. So it’s been there the whole time and that’s the reality and the question becomes how do we get people to acknowledge and not settle for anything short of full abolition.

CALLIE: What do you think is the next, major hurdle that has to be crossed that will really help make sure that this ends, that this stops? I know it’s much more complicated than just one thing but, in your opinion, what has to happen next?

BRAD: There are lots of different systems that need to be built, whole, new laws that need to get passed, and so the hurdles are widespread. But I think one of the biggest ones is that part of the reason the issue persists is because individual people don’t realize their role in helping to end it. And there’s a perception that the issue happens in

far-away places, or to “other people” and that it’s not applicable or relevant to their daily life. So I think that when you acknowledge that, people spring into action when they realize that something might directly affect them. Like if people were told that the water they are drinking is poisoned, lots of people would take interest because they’re concerned for their own health. Or if people were told to watch out for this food, it has salmonella in it, people would really look out for their own health. I think that somehow we have to make that same connection where people make the connection of the issue to their own daily life and their own daily

to acknowledge that connection and really want to do something about it - that’s the next hurdle, getting it down to the individual consumer and the individual personal self interest. That’s a big hurdle to get over.

CALLIE: As a result of our project, I’m curious how you think Lincoln’s ideals and leadership compare to the leadership in the field today?

BRAD: I have immensely enjoyed being on this journey ... this partnership that has developed between President Lincoln’s Cottage and Polaris Project. I think that



*Brad Myles watching the video in the exhibit.*

habits. Other effective social issues -- for example, convincing people that wearing seatbelts could save their lives -- have done this well. Once people make that connection to their own daily life, then all of their own self interest and their own self-preservation kicks into gear. So, what we have to do as an issue, as a field, is that we have to help people make those connections with themselves so that they can’t “other” this issue as something that happens to other people, and if we can make the connection that somebody held in slavery somewhere in the world may be connected to the product that you are now consuming in a cup of coffee, or a bar of chocolate, or the shrimp that you’re eating in a restaurant, or whatever else, and for people

I can speak for everyone in the organization [Polaris Project], from the Board to the leadership to the staff to the volunteers, to say that people have really had their eyes opened about certain parts of history that we didn’t really understand that well. What resonated with me is that learning how close Lincoln was to the war and that he actually went to a battle and was one of the only active, sitting presidents that’s ever taken fire in active combat and that he saw graves of Civil War soldiers buried on his front

lawn every night and that he was so directly inundated with the true costs of the problem he was trying to solve. I think that most of us working on different issues are able to work on the issue from the comfort of an office setting and from a computer, and sometimes we don’t see the direct harm of the issue so closely every day. But certain leaders may be one step removed or they might visit one day or they might kind of do a certain field visit or a site visit but it isn’t immersed in their daily comfort zone every single day in the way that it was for Lincoln. Even at his private retreat where he was trying to get away from the White House, the human casualties of the Civil War were still right there staring him in the face, and I can’t even fathom the intensity

of that as a leader. It's very humbling and it helps to provide context and put things in perspective that he was taking on such an immense task and stress. So that's one thing that has really resonated with me.

The other thing that's really resonated is that you can learn about this parable that he gave where he talked about the black sheep and the wolf and he's talking about the concept of liberty and the sheep saying "thank you for giving me my liberty" and the wolf saying "you just took away mine." So when you're trying to embrace ideas of liberty for everyone and people's own perception of what is their right to be able to do certain things, you can see the ways that those rights sometimes butt heads: the people of the Southern economy saying "this is our right and our livelihood to continue this economic activity" and the slaves saying "this is our right to be free," and that Lincoln was really grappling with those issues of whose liberty do you prioritize when push comes to shove and you can't embrace both. It's been incredibly instructive to reflect on that concept that sometimes liberty can't have it both ways and the ways that [that concept is] playing out in the modern-day human trafficking movement where there are different interests of liberty at play. The liberty of people to run a certain type of business or a certain type of way of making money, and the liberty of victims to be treated in certain ways and I've really loved learning about that parable and applying it in the modern day.

CALLIE: I hadn't thought about it quite from that perspective, that's fascinating. What would you want people to know about Polaris Project and the work you're doing here?

BRAD: I would want them to know that there is a thriving modern-day movement to fight against forms of modern slavery that I think has the same torch burning within it as the historical abolitionist movement. The thing that was driving them is very similar to the thing that's driving us. It's a similar spirit.

So when we named the organization Polaris Project and the two co-founders [Katherine Chon and Derek Ellerman] chose the name, they very purposefully chose the name to try to capture the concept that that spirit has endured and that the spirit that was driving the anti-slavery movement in those years, in the 1800's, is the same spirit that is driving us now. One of the few things that has tied those eras together is the shining of that star, the North Star, Polaris. And so we draw strength and inspiration from that spirit and I'd love for people to know that there's this modern-day movement that has hundreds of organizations and hundreds of government agencies and all the different elements of a modern day movement and it's growing. I would also like people to know that organizations that work on this issue full time, like Polaris, depend on people wanting to join the movement and do something and we are resources that they can use and a harbor that they can dock at. But the movement is ultimately dependent on people taking on this issue in their own lives, in their own communities, in their own states, in their own countries. So we don't want people to say "I don't need to work on this because it's good to know that places like Polaris Project exist; they've got it taken care of." Actually our perspective is the total opposite, which is "Yes, we may exist, but we're depending on people to get activated and to join this field and to embrace this issue in their daily lives to really get the job done."

There are lots of details I'd love for people to learn about Polaris, our website – [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org). I'd love people to learn about the National Hotline that we operate with the number 1-888-373-7888. I'd love for people to get involved and want to follow our mailing list. But those deeper concepts I'd want people to understand is that we're depending on them to get involved and the movement will ultimately be successful when they do. And that we share that same spirit that was burning in the past and it's still very alive today.

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*Can You Walk Away?* will open on February 17, 2012 in the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center at President Lincoln's Cottage. The Visitor Education Center is open Monday through Saturday 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM and Sunday 10:30 AM - 4:30 PM. Admission is free. This exhibit contains graphic content that may be too sensitive for some guests. Visitor discretion is advised.  
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