

THE AMERICAN VISION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
ON THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL  
150 Years After Lincoln  
70 Years After Marian Anderson

At this moment

Resting in the comfort of the statue  
Of the 16th president of the United States  
Missing  
An equally impressive representation  
Of his friend and adviser  
Frederick Douglass

We come

On this day

Recalling the difficult and divisive war  
We are compelled  
    With a prayer in the name  
    Of those captured and enslaved  
    Who with heart and mind  
    Cleared the wilderness  
    Raised crops  
    Brought forth families  
    Submitted their souls  
    Before a merciful and great God  
To acknowledge that The Civil War  
Was fought not to free the enslaved  
For they knew they were free  
But to free the nation  
From a terrible cancer eating at our hearts

At this moment

48

In which we are embarrassed  
By the Governor of our fifth largest state  
Who appoints a man to the United States Senate  
To which both he and his minion agree:  
    The Letter of the Law  
    Is more important than  
    The Spirit of the Law

Now

When we are dismayed that the accidental  
Governor of the Empire State can find  
Just one more reason to rain pain  
And rejection on a family that has offered only  
Grace and graciousness

After two hundred years  
When we rejoice that another son  
Of the Midwest has offered himself  
His wife and his two precious daughters  
To show us a better way

We gather

In recognition and understanding  
That today is always and forever today  
Allowing us to offer this plea  
    For light  
    And truth  
    And Goodness

49

Forgiving as we are forgiven  
Being neither tempted nor intolerant of those who are

We come

At this moment  
To renew and refurbish  
The American vision  
Of Abraham Lincoln

12 February 2009

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Nikki  
Giovanni  
"Chasing Utopia"

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**UNWRITTEN RULES FOR  
YOUNG BLACK BOYS WANTING  
TO LIVE IN MISSISSIPPI  
LONG ENOUGH TO BECOME MEN**

- Rule number one. White is always right.
- Number two. Never look a white man in the eye.
- Three. Always answer *yes Sir* or *no Ma'am* when spoken to by whites.
- Four. Always look for, use or request the colored section.
- Five. Never speak to, smile at or stare in the direction of a white woman.
- Six. Pretend your name really is boy, son, or worse.
- Seven. Ignore all white sexual aggression towards your sisters, mothers, or aunts.
- Eight. Always suppress your anger, cynicism, and rage or mask it with a wide grin, pretend stupidity, and silence.
- Nine. If a white man says it looks like rain, wish out loud for an umbrella no matter how dry it is.
- Ten. If you forget any of these rules, fall back on rule number one.

Frank X Walker

"Turn Me Loose:  
The Unghosting of  
Medgar Evers"

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**AMBIGUITY OVER THE  
CONFEDERATE FLAG**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| In the old south<br>we would sit on the veranda<br>look out over the horizon at<br>the young<br>who happily played behind<br>while their mothers<br>sang rapturous spirituals<br>those were good ol' days<br>not having to use the whip<br>was more civilized | <i>life was full of work<br/>from sunup to sundown<br/>nothing but fields of cotton<br/>children<br/>tried to pick their own weight<br/>by age 13 filled 500 lb sacks<br/>and lived the blues<br/>for plantation owners<br/>sharecropping and extending debt<br/>was almost more profitable<br/>than slavery</i> |
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# The Negro Speaks of Rivers

Langston Hughes, 1902 - 1967

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the  
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln  
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy  
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.