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**ABRAHAM LINCOLN, BARRACK OBAMA –
ALL HUMANS WERE CREATED EQUAL.**

By:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chief Richard Akinjide, CON, SAN, FCI Arb (U.K), FCE is a practising Member of the **Bar of England and Wales with Chambers at 9 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3BP**. He practises also at **The Gambian Bar**. He specialises in **Oil and Gas, Companies and Banking Matters, Mergers and Acquisitions, Shipping, International Commercial Arbitration and International Law**. He is a **Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, United Kingdom (UK)**. He took **Silk in Nigeria as a Senior Advocate on January 12, 1978** and was **Called to the Nigerian Bar in March 1956**. **Member of Nigerian Federal Parliament 1959- 1966**, Member of the **International Law Commission of the United Nations in Geneva from 1981 – 1986**, **Federal Minister of Education 1965 -1966**. **Attorney-General and Minister of Justice of Nigeria 1979-1983**. He is the author of the **2nd Edition of "Africa and The Development of International Law"** published by **Martinus Nijhoff at The Hague, The Netherlands (1988)** and selling worldwide. **Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council of the University of Jos 1976-79**.

He is an **active** member of the **Association of International Petroleum Negotiators (AIPN) in TEXAS, United States of America (USA)**. Cases he handled are reported in various **Law Reports in Nigeria, England, The Gambia** and in **International Law Reports**.

He represented **Nigeria** as the **Co-Agent** and a **Counsel** in the case **Cameroon v Nigeria** at **The World Court, The Hague** for **about 8 (eight) years** involving **International Boundary Dispute from Lake Chad to The Atlantic Ocean**. He was a member for **four (4) years** of the team of **International Jurists** that drafted **The**

Law of The Sea-Convention otherwise known as “**The Constitution of The Sea**” which is the **biggest Convention** ever sponsored by the **United Nations (UN)**.

Chief Richard Akinjide signed that **Convention** and **The Final Act** on behalf of **Nigeria at Montego-Bay, Jamaica. Publications** of **AKINJIDE & CO** series which started with “**Advocacy, Ethics and The Bar**” have now reached **36 (thirty-six)** issues and circulates world-wide. **Chief Richard Akinjide** established trusts in the **Universities of Ibadan, Jos and Cambridge (England) and the Nigerian Law School for Annual Prizes in Law. Five (5) of his children read law. Chief Richard Akinjide** was the **President** of the **Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) 1970-1973** and past **Chairman** of the **Nigerian Body of Benchers** and a past **Member of the Council of Legal Education. Was a visiting Lecturer** for the **LL.M Programme** in the **Alternative Dispute Resolution, International Commercial Arbitration etc, University of Ibadan. Awarded Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON) in 2002. Distinguished Fellow of the Nigerian Law School. Honoured as Fellow of the Babcock University Circle of Eminence (FCE) in 2007. He travelled extensively in all the continents of the world. He reads widely outside law. He is a collector of Works and Arts in Nigeria, Europe and USA.**

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Golf, Snooker, Gardening and Arts appreciation.

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**ABRAHAM LINCOLN, BARRACK OBAMA –
ALL HUMANS WERE CREATED EQUAL.**

By: Chief Richard Akinjide, CON, SAN, FCI Arb. (U.K), FCE.

Today **January 20, 2009**, an Afro-American of an African father becomes the **President** and the **Commander-in-Chief** of the **United States of America** – The most powerful and the Richest Nation in the World. In effect, the Leader of the World. That is unique – no matter however you look at it. That is the event we are gathered here today to mark and celebrate. A unique and unprecedented event in the history of the world and, indeed, in the history of human race. It is a peaceful revolution engineered by **Democracy** and the **Rule of Law**. For those who are **happy** at this turn of event and history, I say **congratulations**, and for those who feel **unhappy**, I say, please take heart, **no one can either alter or arrest the mechanics of historical changes**. Where is the **Roman Empire**? Where are the **British and French and the Ottoman Empires**? Where is the **Soviet Empire**? **The entire world should be a nation of one family where there should be no room for half free and half slaves whether in political and economic terms**. No one coming to this world was ever asked to elect his choice of race or colour. So why punish anyone for something over which he or she has no control?

It is very tempting, on an occasion like this, to write and speak effusively about **Barrack Obama** who few minutes ago was sworn in as the President and Commander-in-Chief of the United States of America. **Let others do that. I will not. To me the hero of this moment is Abraham Lincoln who triggered and started the Revolution we are now celebrating and of which Barrack Obama is just a beneficiary**. No one should think for a moment that I underrate or devalue **Barrack Obama's** unique and excellent contributions to today's event and to what led to it. I must not, I cannot and I do not.

Barrack Obama's charisma, brilliance by any standard and starring oratory, like that of Abraham Lincoln, had earned the admiration of many people all over the world. One of the reasons why those who are successful in their business or profession go into politics is that **they want to make history and want to be part of history**. But those are not for the faint hearted who abhor taking risks. **The life journey itself from start to finish is a risky enterprise**. That was, and still is, part the reasons why both **Abraham Lincoln** and **Barrack Obama** went into politics, **despite all their educational and professional successes. They are legends**. Those

reasons remain valid since the time of **Troy to Vietnam till today**. Tacitus described politics as **“The most flagrant of all passions”**.

Paradoxically, **the journey of the pinnacle to power by Abraham Lincoln and by Barrack Obama** have a lot in common. **Lincoln’s road to success was longer, more tortuous, and far less likely.**

Born on **February 12, 1809, in a log cabin** on an isolated place farm in the **slave state of Kentucky**, **Abraham Lincoln** had an older sister, **Sarah**, who died in child birth when he was nineteen, and a young brother who died in infancy. **His father, Thomas, had never learnt to read and according to Abraham Lincoln.** Never did **“more in the way of writing than to bunglingly sign his own name”**. As a six year-old boy, young Thomas had watched a **Shawnee riding party murdered his father**. This violent death, Lincoln later suggested, coupled with poverty left Thomas **“a wondering laboring boy” growing up without education.** **Lincoln’s father** was working as a rough carpenter and hired hand when he married **Nancy Hanks, a quiet, intelligent young woman of uncertain ancestry.**

In later life, Lincoln neither romanticized nor sentimentised the difficult circumstances of his childhood. When asked in 1860 by his **campaign biographer**, John Locke Scripps, to share the details of his early days, he replied: **“why Scripps, it is a great piece of folly to attempt to make any thing out of my early life. It can all be condensed into a single sentence you will find in Grey’s Elegy: “The short and simple annals of the Poor”**”.

Of the **four rivals** who wanted to be **President** when **Lincoln** contested, **Seward** alone kept parents into his adulthood, **Chase**, was only eight when he lost his father. **Bates** was **eleven.** **Their lives like, Lincolns, were molded by loss. But the lonely months of living without adult supervision must be difficult.** Lincoln had never even set foot **“inside of a college or academy building”** until he acquired his licence to practice law. What he had in the way of education he had to pick up on his own.

The volumes to feed Lincoln’s intellectual hunger did not come cheaply. The story is often recounted of the time he borrowed Parson Weems’s *Life of George Washington* from Josiah Crawford, a well-to-do farmer who lived sixteen miles away. Thrilled by this celebrated account of the first president’s life, he took the book to his loft at night, where, by the light of a tallow candle, or if tallow was scarce, by a grease lamp made from hickory bark gathered in the woods, he read as long as he could stay awake, placing the book on a makeshift shelf between the cabin logs so he could retrieve it at daybreak. During a severe rainstorm one

night, the book was badly soiled and the covers warped. Lincoln went to Crawford's house, explained what had happened, and offered to work off the value of the book. Crawford calculated the value of two full days' work pulling corn, which Lincoln considered an unfair reimbursement. Or an unfair contract. Nevertheless, he straightway set to work and kept on until "there was not a corn blade left on a stalk." Then, having paid his debt, Lincoln wrote poems and songs lampooning "Josiah blowing his bugle" – Crawford's large nose. Thus Crawford, in return for loaning Lincoln a book and then exorbitantly penalizing him, won a permanent, if unflattering, place in American history.

A lucid, inquisitive, and extraordinarily dogged mind was Lincoln's native endowment. Already he possessed a vivid sensibility for the beauty of the English language. Often reading aloud, he was attracted to the sound of language along with its meaning –its music and rhythms. He found this in poetry, and to the end of his life would recite poems, often lengthy passages, from memory. He seemed especially drawn to poetry that spoke of our doomed mortality and the transience of earthly achievements. For clearly Lincoln, this acolyte of pure reason and remorseless logic, was also a romantic. All three of Lincoln's rivals shared his early love of books, but none had as difficult a task securing them or finding the leisure to read. In the household of his classically educated father, Seward had only to pick a book from well-stocked shelves, while both local academies he attended and Union College maintained substantial collections of books on history, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, chemistry, grammar, and geography. Chase, likewise, had access to libraries, at his uncle's boys' school in Worthington and at Dartmouth College. And while books were not plentiful where Bates grew up, he had the luxury of his scholarly relative's home, where he could peruse at will an extensive collection.

The distance between the educational advantages Lincoln's rivals enjoyed and the hardships Lincoln endured were rendered even greater by the cultural resistance Lincoln faced once his penchant for reading became known. In the pioneer world of rural Kentucky and Indiana, where physical labour was essential for survival and mental exertion was rarely considered a legitimate form of work, Lincoln's book hunger was regarded as odd and indolent. Nor would his community understand the thoughts and emotions stirred by his reading; there were few to talk to about the most important and deeply experienced activities of his mind.

While Lincoln's stepmother took "particular Care not to disturb him would let him read on and on till [he] quit of his own accord," his father needed help with

the tiresome chores of felling trees, digging up stumps, splitting rails, plowing, weeding, and planting. When he found his son in the field reading a book or, worse still, distracting fellow workers with tales or passages from one of his books, he would angrily halt the activity so that work could continue. The boy's endeavours to better himself often incurred the resentment of his father, who occasionally destroyed his books and may have physically abused him.

Lincoln's relationship with his father grew strained, particularly when his last chance for schooling was foreclosed by his father's decision to hire him out. He laboured for various neighbours butchering hogs, digging wells, and clearing land in order to satisfy a debt the family had incurred. Such conflict between father and son was played out in thousands of homes as the "self-made" men in Lincoln's generation sought to pursue ambitions beyond the camped lives of their fathers.

I think the pinnacle of Abraham Lincoln's success was perhaps reached at Cooper Union in New York where on February 27, 1860 before crowd of more than 1500 he delivered what New York Tribune called:

"One of the happiest and most convincing political arguments ever made in this city" in defence of Republican principles and to confine slavery to where it already existed. "The vast assemblage frequently rang with cheers and shouts of applause which were prolonged and intensified at chore. No man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience"

His three other contenders for nomination were house names in Republican circles. William Henry Seward Senator from New York, Ohio's Salmon P. Chase Senator and Gov Edward Bates framed the Missouri Constitution – elder statesmen".

Abraham Lincoln, lawyer, at 51 was nominated on May 18, 1860. Chicago was Republican Presidential Party venue for the Convention. He won the Presidential election that followed and he became the President of the United States America.

Twenty months before the Emancipation Proclamation, the President had told Hay that "the central idea pervading this struggle is the necessity that is upon us, of proving that popular government is not an absurdity," predicting that "if we fail it will go far to prove the incapability of the people to govern themselves." Now tens of thousands had died in pursuit of that purpose. At Gettysburg,

Abraham Lincoln expressed that same conviction in far more concise and eloquent terms as follows:

“Four score and seven years ago,

Our fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate – we can not consecrate – we can not hallow – this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here, have, thus far, so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that, government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth”.

Henceforth, that Address of **Abraham Lincoln** became known among the most famous speeches in history as **GETTYSBURG ADDRESS**. I read it for the first time in 1949 when the book known as “**Abraham Lincoln**” by **DRINKWATER** was one of the prescribed books for the **English Literature Senior Cambridge Examination** at **ODUDUWA COLLEGE, Ile-Ife** which I attended. It changed my views and my attitude to life for all times.

The **United States National Park Service** in **April 2008** opened a **USD\$103 Million Museum and Visitor Centre** to help visitors to **GETTYSBURG** vast battle field in **Pennsylvania**. The **6000 (six thousand) acres** or **2,430 hectares** expanse dotted with nearly **1,400** memorials and monuments the **North America’s bloodiest battle**, is where the **Union Armies** beat back **General Robert E. Lee’s confederate assault**

on the Northern territory in a turning point in the USA Civil War and where Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous speech.

The complex is tucked into a wooded area on the **GETTYSBURG National Military Park** – land that saw no major action in the three-day **Civil War battle from July 1 to 3, 1863**. More than **51,000 confederate and union soldiers were killed, wounded or captured**. The current visitor centre was built in **1921** and acquired by **the National Park Service in 1971**.

I hereby acknowledge the following as part of my sources for this contribution: (a) **“Abraham Lincoln” by DRINKWATER**, (b) **DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN** who has written copiously on **The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln and Team of Rivals** and (c) that **excellent daily - International Herald Tribune**.

I end by quoting **Aristotle** who said in **Latin: “Amicus Plato, sed amica veritas”** meaning **“Plato is dear to me, but dearer still, is the truth”**.

Over to you our **Black African Rulers**.

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