

New Traveling Exhibition Tells the Story of Abraham Lincoln's Struggle to Meet the Constitutional Challenges of the Civil War.

The San Bernardino Public Library is pleased to announce the opening of a new exhibition, "Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War", on view at the Feldheim Central Library from December 17, 2012 through January 31, 2013 located at 555 W. 6th Street in San Bernardino. The National Constitution Center and the American Library Association Public Programs Office organized the traveling exhibition, which was made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH): great ideas brought to life.

Based upon an original interactive exhibit developed by the National Constitution Center, this traveling version explores Lincoln's struggle to resolve the basic questions that divided Americans at the most perilous moment in the nation's history: Was the United States truly one nation, or was it a confederacy of sovereign and separate states? How could a country founded on the belief that "all men are created equal" tolerate slavery? In a national crisis, would civil liberties be secure? President Lincoln used the Constitution to confront the secession of Southern states, slavery and wartime civil liberties. Lincoln's decisions about these three intertwined crises of war reinvented the Constitution and the promise of American life. This exhibition develops a more complete understanding of Abraham Lincoln as president and the Civil War as the nation's gravest constitutional crisis.

The traveling exhibition is composed of informative panels featuring photographic reproductions of original documents, including a draft of Lincoln's first inaugural speech, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment.

"We are delighted to have been selected as a site for this exhibition," said Library Director Deborah Clark. "And even more excited to have timed the exhibit to accompany the release of the blockbuster film "Lincoln". We invite the public and students to enjoy the film and then come and see the free exhibit at the Library to learn more about Lincoln's presidency. As a new president, Abraham Lincoln was faced with enormous challenges. This exhibition shows how Lincoln struggled with issues of secession, slavery and civil liberties—all questions our country's founding charter left unanswered. Each section of the exhibit features information about a different aspect of Lincoln's presidency. For example, the section about slavery examines the various policy options Lincoln once embraced and how his thoughts about slavery evolved over time. Most importantly, the exhibit helps visitors understand why Lincoln's struggle with the Constitution still matters today.

While the exhibit is available for immediate free touring by individuals and student groups, the library is sponsoring free programs during January 2013, in connection with the exhibition. These programs are designed for the whole family and represent "living history" depictions as well as informative and even scholarly programs on Lincoln's challenges then and the ongoing question of states rights vs. Federal authority that are acting out across the country today.

The first programming event will kick off a Black History Month celebration and will be held Saturday, January 12, 2013 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Norman Feldheim Central Library. The day will include a "living history" presentation by the American Civil War Society; a historic Marine Band performance; and an Abraham Lincoln impersonator.

On Tuesday, January 15 at 6 p.m. Don McCue from the Lincoln Shrine in Redlands will speak on "Lincoln's Difficult Path to Emancipation: The 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation".

Wednesday, January 16 at 6 p.m. Rev. Dennis Brown will re-enact the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. Rev. Brown will be joined by a three piece band performing music of the era.

“More programs are currently being scheduled,” says Clark, “so check our Website at www.sbpl.org and our Facebook page for a glimpse of the exhibit, a calendar of events and more.”

Contact Linda Adams Yeh at 909.381.8238 or visit www.sbpl.org for more information, to schedule class visits, to volunteer to assist in programs or to donate funds to make the celebration even bigger.

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