

Lincoln Review Commentaries — January-February 2006

COMMENTARY #1

One of the most important anniversaries in American history was almost overlooked by the mainstream news media as this year began. Remember Emancipation? Hi! This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

One hundred and forty three years ago, when, on the first of January, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln picked up his pen to sign the long debated and hugely anticipated Proclamation to free slaves in those states which engaged in an uncivil secession, he spoke confidently:

“I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right, than I do in signing this paper.”

Yet he had wrestled with his Cabinet, his conscience and the political realities of such a move since mid-July, 1862, according to historian Doris Kearns Goodwin in her latest book, “**Team of Rivals.**” An excerpted section regarding only the Emancipation issue of the book was featured in the January 2006 edition of *Smithsonian* magazine.

It was during the carriage ride to the funeral of the infant son of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton on July 13, a month after devastating Union Army battle losses in the spring “peninsula campaign” in Virginia, when Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles noted in his diary that the worried President said he had “come to the conclusion” that freeing the slaves in Confederate states “was a military necessity absolutely essential for the salvation of the Union.”

Welles’ diary adds that Lincoln was convinced “we must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued,” which was the President’s way of saying Constitutional provisions that protected the private property of slaveholders, must now be superceded by the essential war powers of the nation’s chief executive in the hour of national crisis. During an extended session with his Cabinet over a two-day period Lincoln said he had decided on emancipation.

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He also indicated for the first time that he was contemplating the possible acceptance of blacks into the Union Army's ranks. The Proclamation did not, initially, cover slaves in states supporting the Union cause or in the border states, which were still uncommitted. Nonetheless, the Cabinet was very reluctant to provide any hearty endorsement for a declaration that several feared would intensify the Confederacy's resistance and perhaps lead to even worse acts of violence against slaves who, too carelessly, responded to the appealing seduction of emancipation.

Secretary of State William Henry Seward endorsed the President's decision wholeheartedly but urged that the timing of its public issuance coincide with a significant Union victory so that the Proclamation would not seem to be an act of desperation by a Government which had lost a string of very costly battles against a far more capable Confederate command.

Not until September 17, at Antietam in Western Maryland did the Union set back Confederate forces during what many describe as the bloodiest battle of the entire Civil War. Some estimates place the killed and wounded casualty total for all units, North and South, at 40,000. Though neither side conceded, the Confederacy's advance toward Pennsylvania was blunted.

Five days later, Lincoln told the Cabinet he would formally sign and issue the Proclamation on New Year's Day 1863. Following the traditional January 1st White House and attendant Cabinet-level receptions, a wearied President and Secretary Seward finally found the time when they could carefully signed the Proclamation of Emancipation, in what appeared to be President Lincoln's best handwriting. They immediately released it to the press.

Thus, Abraham Lincoln had made official the end of slavery's legal status in the U.S.A. It was the noblest of deeds in America's history since the Declaration of Independence and adoption of the Bill of Rights, over 80 years earlier.

This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

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COMMENTARY #2

It's no wonder Al Gore uses recent speaking opportunities to bad mouth President Bush now that Gore's 1990s' "global warming" plans have been so sullied by those who approved them. Hi! This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

Many of us have vivid memories of the then Vice President's dire warnings of impending doom and the proposed Gore solution wrapped up neatly in a Kyoto, Japan, conference treaty agreement for all the world to sign. A centerpiece of Gore's alarms was that advanced industrialized nations – and most especially the United States – were contaminating the upper atmosphere with so much carbon dioxide and monoxide from motor vehicle and electric power generator fossil fuel use, that cloud layers of protective ozone were being dissolved and unrestricted sunlight would soon bake planet Earth. Such a calamity would disrupt all the seasons and return us, at best, to a tropical nightmare suitable, perhaps, for a new age of dinosaurs.

At the UN Kyoto meeting, there was quick and overwhelming approval of the Treaty though some analysts predicted the terms of compliance could be Draconian. Gore was proud to admit that, if approved by Washington, the Treaty would set the economy of the U.S. back to 1990-92 levels of energy capability.

Nearly all of Europe, except Russia, joined Japan and other Pacific Rim industrialized countries in approving participation in reducing those activities that might be damaging our earthly climate. All the signers promised to abide by Kyoto requirements though few delegates would admit to knowing just how their nations would be able to handle cutbacks on progress.

When the Vice President came back to Washington and urged the Senate, to ratify the Treaty, the vote was a unanimous "No!"

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Shortly thereafter, it became clear that the other great polluters of the atmosphere - China and India and virtually all of the under-developed world would NOT be required to sign up. Though reluctant, Russia eventually did sign up.

With the U.S. election of George W. Bush in 2000, U.S. non-compliance with Kyoto's accords was affirmed when he made it clear the United States would not approve but would focus great effort, in both the government and private sectors, to develop beneficial reductions in so-called "greenhouse gases." The result is that nearly nine years after Kyoto was adopted, 13 of the 15 charter signer nations from the European Community (EU) are still unable to keep their pledged commitments for atmosphere-pollution reduction.

The amount of increased contamination coming from the booming U.S. economy at the end of those nine years is less than the amount of increases that have occurred in most of the original EU Kyoto-approving countries. It is barely half that of a few EU signatories.

Thus, it appeared at a recent UN session on KYOTO, held in Montreal, that the Treaty may now be a nearly worthless document. Even if every nation, including the U.S., China and India, were to adopt it, reports global food analyst and scientist Dennis Avery of the Hudson Institute "think tank" and formerly a senior analyst for the Department of State, tells the Lincoln Institute:

"The Kyoto Protocol has died. None of its members has cut carbon dioxide emissions, and their big Montreal meeting has just failed again to agree on any future cuts. Kyoto wouldn't make any real difference to global warming." Noting that climatologists contend a five percent cut in greenhouse emissions would be necessary before "greenhouse" effects could be reduced, Avery says that would be "ridiculous" if, indeed, greenhouse warming is ever convincingly shown to be "truly human-made and dangerous. Kyoto members would have to slash their carbon dioxide output by 70 to 80 percent to make a real difference in greenhouse gases." Kyoto, R.I.P.

This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

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COMMENTARY #3

On January 20th, 2006, a quarter century had passed since the Inauguration of Ronald Reagan as President. With a few exceptions, none of them painfully long in duration, U.S. success has been dominant. Hi! This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review in Washington, D.C. .

As the Wall Street Journal's editors recently reminded any remaining "doubting-Thomas," the last 25 years have given Americans one of the greatest, if not the greatest, economic growth rides ever realized in history. What made it possible was a 1980 election and the January 1981 Inauguration of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States.

That occasion ended a slide in the nation's strength and the will of the people, that followed the turbulent, disruptive, 1960s, the Vietnam War catastrophe, the Nixon Presidency's Watergate debacle, and the 1974 Presidential election. In that election, the nation turned to a soft-spoken Democrat to clean out the remaining debris of the Watergate episode.

Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalind brought their well-intentioned, squeaky-clean, "Born-Again," southern charm into Washington to give Americans a respite from nearly 15 years of unsavory politics. But all the high purpose and dedication in their arrival, notwithstanding, the new Chief Executive's administrative talents were unremarkable and, economically speaking, almost clueless. The former Georgia Governor and peanut warehouseman was soon overwhelmed by rapidly soaring interest rates, signs of dangerous inflationary activity, price control miseries and the Iran hostage crisis that would last for 444 days as the U.S. Embassy staff in Teheran – 176 in number – was held prisoner by the militant Muslim mullahs in protest of the policies of the allegedly "Great Satan" America.

Fortunately, since the war-stressed late 1960s, a new star arose in the firmament of national Republican politics. The star was Ronald Reagan.

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The former Hollywood actor of World War Two vintage and, by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, an acclaimed two term GOP Governor of California, had a clear and determined message of conservative values and objectives. Reagan won with his unmistakable call for reasserting U.S. military power and prestige, sharply cutting federal spending and federal taxes, and for developing a strategy of victory.

The strategy he proposed to end the Cold War standoff between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union's subjugation of Eastern Europe and its menacing military threat to 20th Century civilization and freedom, was simple. He would rebuild our armed forces capability that had been sidelined since the Vietnam pull-out.

When asked to explain his strategy to the media, he told reporters, it was quite simple: "We win! They lose!" The strategy was successful and by 1989, a year after he completed his White House terms, the vaunted and threatening Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) collapsed, pulling the 70-year fabrication of Communism and Marxist rationalizations down with it.

But Reagan's greatest long-term domestic accomplishment proved to be his lowering of tax rates and his insistence on a strong monetary policy to make the dollar, as he put it, "as good as gold." Thanks to his determined refusal to waiver in carrying out his seemingly Spartan objectives, the U.S.A. has experienced 25 years of prosperity except for a grand total of 15 recession-labeled months out of the 276 months that have elapsed.

The Journal reports: "That is to say, 94 percent of the time, the U.S. economy has been creating jobs (43 million in all) and wealth (\$30 trillion). More wealth has been created in the U.S. in the last quarter century than in the previous 200 years.

"The policy lessons of this supply-side prosperity need to be constantly relearned, lest we return to the errors that produced the 1970s," the Journal editors added. To that we say, AMEN!

This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

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COMMENTARY #4

An economics professor and Nobel Prize recipient in Year 2000 wants America to invest far more money and effort in building character qualities in less fortunate children, especially in minority neighborhoods. Hi! This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

James J. Heckman is one of the more thoughtful academics at the University of Chicago who is convinced our nation's public and private school educators are missing an opportunity to increase our national wealth. He has conducted extensive economic studies to show that if we could focus more attention on non-cognitive aspects of childhood development as well as the work we presently do on the cognitive, the United States would get a much higher per capita income – maybe as much as 17 percent more – than we presently realize.

The fancy term cognitive, of course, refers to specific subject matter we teach such as mathematics, English, science or history. Non-cognitive are the qualities and standards we might hope for in the attitude and behavior of our citizens such as honesty, integrity, loyalty and compassion for others. Heckman says these qualities can begin to be instilled in a child beginning as early as six months after birth and should be seriously emphasized between ages four and eight. But in homes where there is often no father as a role model or the mother is shiftless, substance addictive or too lacking in non-cognitive qualities herself, even the possibly bright child, without guidance, becomes just another “lost cause.”

Making the child fully aware of the importance of moral behavior, of the ideals of generosity and respect for others, explains Heckman in a recent commentary in the Wall Street Journal, enables the child to enter the increasingly challenging ages of puberty and teenage with a firmer appreciation and understanding of what is good, what is preferred or what is rewarding in terms of himself or herself and/or in terms of society as a whole and the youth's place in it.

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In extending our own research at the Lincoln Institute into the subject addressed by Professor Heckman, we came across the Admissions requirements for graduate medical student-doctors wishing to become members of the Faculty of Medicine at Calgary University in Western Canada. Allow me to share with you just a few of the highlights of what Calgary's administrators describe as "non-cognitive qualities we look for."

Calgary insists in pertinent documentation (and I quote) "as practicing medicine is a moral undertaking, our admission process aims to admit students who will in their behaviors reflect" the attributes of Altruism, Compassion, Empathy, Integrity, "and who will in their professional relationships Act dutifully, Act ethically, Be reflective, Be reliable, Be trustworthy and honest, Demonstrate humility, Maintain confidences." (end quotation)

The University also stresses that students should be self-directed learners, willing to assess and look at themselves critically and be enthusiastically willing to work hard, manage time wisely, tolerate stress and demonstrate good judgment.

These University criteria in the non-cognitive arena, appear to me to be appropriate requirements for a lot more than medical school teaching candidates. They ought to be the substance of a litmus test for every American candidate for public office, whether appointed or elected, right up the ladder to the occupants of the White House. They should be required by every board for all private sector corporation's executive post candidates and, in fact, for the corporate board members themselves.

Many of the values and standards cited used to be absolutely basic in most American families. It is a national tragedy that such is no longer the case but at least Professor Heckman and Calgary University are still calling our attention to the fact.

This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

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COMMENTARY #5

Naughtily wink and roll the eyes when alluding to people of color in the U.S. these days. From Hillary's sly hints to El Chocolate (pronounced Chock-Oh-Lah-Tay) City Mayor Nagin, race bias is back. Hi! This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review in Washington, D.C.

Anyone truly intent on celebrating the January 16, 2006, anniversary of the birthday of Martin Luther King, may have been upset by an assortment of news reports and accounts of relevant historical events that appeared in the national media.

Attracting the most attention, of course, was New York Democrat Senator and Presidential wannabe Hillary Rodham Clinton's shameless pandering to a Harlem black audience by suggesting the Republican Congress and White House were like a plantation in addressing civil rights issues. Then with the body-English of a snickering sneer, she added: "You know what I'm talkin' about...."

FOX News commentator and syndicated columnist Tony Snow later observed her performance was "damaging" to her own image because she didn't "appeal to hearts" in her audience as her husband so successfully did when he was campaigning. "She wanted to whip up some rage," Snow said, adding: "Had she proceeded to distribute fried chicken and watermelon, she would have achieved perfect condescension. "Tellingly, the crowd stood silent for a good two beats – a sure sign the attendees were shocked, embarrassed or unmoved...."

Over in beleaguered New Orleans, Mayor Ray Nagin continued his persistent susceptibility to "foot-in-mouth disease."

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He claimed that before hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck, late last year, the “Big Easy” city below sea level had been a “chocolate city” and as it attempts to rebuild, it will be a “chocolate city” yet again. A day or so later he tried to apologize for his remarks but neither blacks nor whites accepted excuses for his crude racially-charged gaffes.

In Atlanta, meanwhile, King’s four children are engaged in a very public and thus ugly, and much publicized dispute over what to do with The Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc. This Center is a fairly impressive group of red-brick structures that have been allowed to deteriorate to a costly degree by family feuding and a tug-of-war over management of the properties.

National Park Service estimators and Dexter King, the California-based son who is CEO business manager of the site, indicate that although the property is valued at slightly more than \$11 million, repairs and restoration of the facilities which are now required would cost more than \$11.5 million. Even a fancy garden pool is seriously cracked and the annual turn-out of visitors coming to the Center isn’t enough to support adequate maintenance, the King children say. Furthermore, in six of the most recent eight years for which federal tax returns are available, the Center has lost money.

That’s why Dexter and sister Yolanda would prefer to sell the Center to the Park Service to operate as an adjunct to King’s home nearby, which the Park Service has run as a national historic shrine. To this idea, children Bernice and Martin the Third are bitterly opposed. This year’s observance of King’s birthday was certainly not a particularly happy one.

This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review in Washington, D.C.

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COMMENTARY #6

“Unique” is an overused and often incorrectly used word but Marjorie Holloman Parker almost met the definition in 1960s Washington, D.C.
Hi! This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review in Washington.

In the politically correct terminology of full disclosure let me first assure you that the lady named Parker I am about to report on was no relation to this commentator. But she was a very dear friend of mine and of my wife, Dolores for many years. At age 89, Marjorie Parker passed away from heart disease at her home in the District of Columbia on January 16th. She was long a prominent educator and community leader in the District.

Born in Winton, North Carolina, December 19, 1916, she was the daughter of that community’s popular minister, the Rev. J.L.S. Holloman and his wife. Her parents moved the family to the District when she was a child and her father became Pastor of the Second Baptist Church. She graduated from Washington’s Dunbar High School in 1932 and from what was then known as Miner Teachers College in 1936.

She was married in 1939 to Barrington D. Parker, Sr., an attorney who would later become a Judge of the U.S. District Court for D.C. and who, incidentally, presided over the trial of John Hinckley after attempting the assassination of President Ronald Reagan in 1981. The senior Judge Parker was also involved with many other important cases in his career which ended with his death in 1993.

Marjorie earned Masters and Ph.D degrees in education while teaching elementary school for a decade and serving ten years on the faculty of Miner Teachers College.

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She then became Director of Student Teaching at Bowie, Maryland, State University. Beginning in 1965, Mrs. Parker served again at Miner, by then renamed D.C. Teachers College, as Professor of the History and Philosophy of Education. She retired in 1974 but was appointed in 1976 to the Board of Trustees of the then newly consolidated University of the District of Columbia which brought D.C. Teachers, Federal City College and the Washington Technical Institute under one administrative roof.

Throughout the years, Marjorie and her husband won many honors for their leadership roles in the civic and cultural life of the District of Columbia and I met Marjorie when I resettled in the nation's capital in 1970. Most amazing, to me at the time was to discover that Barrington and Marjorie Parker were prominent Republicans in this political city where the black community was overwhelmingly of Democratic persuasion. The couple risked the ire of some partisan acquaintances when Richard Nixon won the Parker's support in the 1960 presidential election campaign ultimately won by John F. Kennedy.

Between 1958 and 1962, Marjorie was the president of America's first national black sorority – Alpha Kappa Alpha – that had been established back in 1908 at Howard University. This sorority of the nation's foremost black women in business and the professions is one in which my wife Dolores is today very active. So socially, politically and intellectually, both Parker families became extremely close. Dolores and I both mourn the passing of Marjorie Parker whose friendship and brilliant accomplishments contributed so much to our lives as well as to the education, judicial and civic dynamic in the life of the District of Columbia.

This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

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COMMENTARY #7

A great friend and mentor of this broadcaster, Lieutenant-General William P. Yarborough, leaves an enormous legacy of accomplishments in both war and peace. Hi! This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review in Washington, D.C.

Almost from the day of his graduation in 1936 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, General Yarborough was an innovator and leader of incalculable value to the American military and intelligence actions in World War Two, the Korean and Vietnam wars. Even in his retirement years his advice regarding intelligence activities was frequently sought by Presidents, Members of Congress and senior staff personnel in both the White House and Pentagon.

The Seattle-born officer helped develop the military's airborne capabilities, Army intelligence efforts, the creation of the Green Berets which he helped train in the Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the modernization of the military's intelligence gathering sophistication in the 1960s and 1970s.

What brought me into contact with the General in the '70s was a World War Two decision by General Mark Clark who chose him to help plan the invasion of North Africa, one of the many great endeavors the Allies were able to successfully carry out in defeating the Nazi juggernaut.

From that campaign experience, General Yarborough derived an intense interest in seeing a postwar, post colonial emergence of independent states on the African continent.

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The General was very concerned about the de-colonization transition in colonially carved African states as the native populations sought full independence from the last vestiges of European government rulers and business domination that had so long kept Africans in virtual, and too often actual, bondage.

In the 1960s, African authority Max Yergan and National Review magazine publisher William Rusher launched the American African Affairs Association – the four A's - as an educational endeavor to better inform both the American and African publics on political and economic development matters. Following retirement from the service, General Yarborough joined as a leading member of the four A's team with which I was actively engaged and was soon chosen to be co-chair with Dr. Walter Darnell Jacobs.

The General provided great advice and direction to our Association, thanks to his extensive personal study of African history and culture and his contacts with the African people and some of their leaders during and since the Second World War. With his counseling and the even greater background information I received from Max Yergan, I was soon groomed to carry out many information and consultative journeys to African centers and to become intimately acquainted with several of the then emerging African civic and political leaders who were trying to establish representative governments, the rule of law and the various interpretations and applications of democratic republics.

General Yarborough, who died December 6, 2005, at age 93, was married for over 60 years to Norma Tuttle, the daughter of an Army Colonel. She died in 1999. The Yarboroughs raised two daughters, one of whom died in 1961, and one son.

This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review in Washington, D.C.

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COMMENTARY #8

Dr. Walter Evans and his wife recently showed their gratitude to their hometown of Savannah, despite that city's behavior in years of segregation, with their fine gift of collected works by black artists. Hi! This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.

When, over half a century ago, Dr. Walter Evans was growing up in Savannah, GA, a black youth, in parts of the then strictly segregated South, was often denied entry to public institutions of culture such as art museums. But at age 19, when he was in Philadelphia with a date, he enjoyed the opportunity and experience of visiting the renowned Philadelphia Museum of Art. Evans then followed that experience by spending some library time to study Impressionist artists, whose work appealed to him, in order to impress his girlfriend. He admits now that he soon became "hooked" on fine art and made a point during subsequent travels around America of visiting many museums but found that very few displayed any artwork by African-Americans.

Thus began Evans life quest and as he became an increasingly successful and respected general surgeon after setting up his practice in Detroit in the late 1970s. It was then that he began purchasing as many quality works by American blacks as he could afford.

Four years ago, Dr. Evans and his wife retired to hometown Savannah and in the last week of December 2005, they and their family Foundation for Art and Literature, announced that over the next ten years they were giving some 63 pieces of the Evans collection to the Savannah College of Art and Design. The Evans' gift represents a third of his total collection. The art donated is estimated to be worth ten million dollars. Included are widely acclaimed paintings by such artists as Romare Bearden, Aaron Douglas and Jacob Lawrence.

The agreement reached with the College calls for the institution to provide a building as a special center for African-American studies wherein the Evans collection will be displayed.

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Evans wants the works seriously studied by students for years to come and has assurances from the college the art will be carefully protected and will never be sold but we hope he is aware that is a promise now being broken by a number of museums and libraries with important collections throughout the country. Money trumps trust far too often in our 21st Century institutional world as Lincoln Review Letter has reported on several occasions.

Incidentally, there are a few similarities to this account in the life of Lincoln Review Letter publisher J.A. (Jay) Parker and his wife, Dolores. Dr. Evans once lived in the Parkers' hometown of Philadelphia. Like the Doctor, Jay set out in search of culture to impress a girlfriend. In Jay's case, he visited Philadelphia's center-city record shops to listen to classical music. He later focused his attention on the music and talents of Metropolitan Opera diva Joan Sutherland of Australia, beginning in 1955, when she was barely two years into her operatic career. When Sutherland retired and wrote her autobiography, Jay met her at a book signing.

When it comes to the matter of Dr. Evans returning home to make a major contribution to the culture of Savannah – the city of his birth where he long ago was denied a boy's access to any culture - Dolores Parker is currently in the process of helping to create and give back something remarkably special in its importance to black business and professional women, and, ultimately, to the renown of the City of Brotherly Love - Philadelphia. She is busily seeking funding for the construction of a \$60-million multi-purpose community center in Philadelphia to house her national Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's Omega Omega Chapter administrative and activities responsibilities. The Chapter's membership of some 400 has been in Philadelphia for 80 years but has never had a headquarters or offices of its own. Now, early in her effort, the Chapter's foundation has already received nine contributions of \$50,000 or more from the sorority Chapter's members. Project leaders vow to accept NO government funding help in their drive.

This is Jay Parker with the Lincoln Review from Washington, D.C.