

The Lincoln Club of Delaware is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2018 essay contest is Molly Erdman, 17, a junior at Cab Calloway School of the Arts. Ms Erdman will receive a \$1000 scholarship, payable to whatever institution of higher education she attends.

We are grateful to the Wilmington Savings Fund Society (WSFS) for its continued support of this contest.

The Wilmington Club of Delaware also acknowledges that this year's quote has been attributed to several sources other than Mr. Lincoln, such as Sophocles, Thomas Carlyle, Robert Ingersoll, and Horatio Alger. As Ms Erdman's essay demonstrates, the philosophy and values it conveys are clearly representative of our sixteenth president.

Many have fought hard to overcome exceedingly difficult obstacles and most, when they want something badly enough, will not let anyone or anything get in their way. Emmeline Pankhurst went to great lengths while working for women's suffrage. Martin Luther King overcame an immense amount of prejudice while fighting for equal rights. Elizabeth the First overcame the sexism and disdain of male politicians during her reign in the 16th century. It is not uncommon for individuals to overcome adversity. However, it is what they do with the power they obtain that truly defines them.

There is strong evidence in history that demonstrates that power often leads to corruption. We have seen past politicians like Boss Tweed and Richard Nixon whose absurd abuses of power led to their downfall. More recent politicians frequently retract campaign promises they vowed to keep. Another great example of this is the Stanford Prison experiment of 1971. The experiment established one group of students as prisoners and another as guards with power. The guards quickly abused their power and mistreated their prisoners, providing a perfect example of how, when put in a position of power over others, those in power often abuse it. As nineteenth century Lord Acton famously said, "Power leads to corruption. Absolute power corrupts absolutely." When we, as American citizens, have seen so much corruption and

unfortunate lack of benevolent leaders, it becomes obvious that the best individuals can take their power and not lose their sense of morality along the way. It is power then, that truly defines a man's character.

George Washington is a great example of how power defines a man's character. George Washington worked hard to become a military leader and politician. He started as a soldier and worked his way up through the ranks, eventually finding himself at the Continental Congress, the Constitutional Convention and then as the first president of the United States. As the first president of the new United States of America, after rule by the tyrannical King of England, it was up to him to define how the new government would run. Washington set a wonderful example, never abusing his power or overstepping his bounds. After two terms, he chose to resign as President, a precedent that would later be followed by almost all of his successors. The fact that Washington was able to run an entire country without abusing power, overstepping his bounds or turning into another tyrant demonstrates what great person he was. It was his role as a person with power, as the President of the United States of America, not the adversity he overcame, which defined him and made him an American legacy today.

Abraham Lincoln is another example of a man who acted wisely in the face of power. Lincoln saw the immorality of slavery and knew something had to be done about it. Even though there were plenty of people at the time who disagreed with him, he never went back on his views. He overcame the adversity of losing his first election but eventually won in 1860. Once in office, Lincoln worked tirelessly to end slavery, including issuing his Emancipation Proclamation of 1862. Lincoln's strong adherence to his own moral compass throughout his presidency is one of his defining characteristics.

Struggles with power and leadership continue today. Currently, the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, is a great example of how power leads to corruption. Since the 1950's, the country has been ruled by one family whose legacy is a continued abuse of power. In the 1990's, the government changed the food rationing system and based it on governmental loyalty. Those perceived as more loyal would receive rations more regularly whereas those perceived as less loyal only received rations once a month. The government officials and elites of North Korea abuse their powers over the ordinary citizens and take the best of everything for themselves and their close acquaintances. They also employ harsh border controls and extreme punishments for those who attempt to escape the country. Though Kim Jong-un has the power to make changes in North Korea and make life in his country better for the average citizen, he continues to rule with an iron fist, instituting public executions, forced labor camps and other extreme punishments against his citizens. Such actions define him as a harsh dictator, instead of a highly moral man.

After reviewing examples of leadership throughout history and today, it becomes obvious it is how an individual acts in the face of power that truly defines his or her character, just as Lincoln famously stated. Though overcoming adversity is an impressive and necessary quality, it requires an extremely strong character to wield power fairly and justly, without losing a sense of morality along the way. May leaders such as Washington and Lincoln whose selfless actions while in power have defined their character be examples to our leaders of today and inspire us all to handle power with grace and humility.