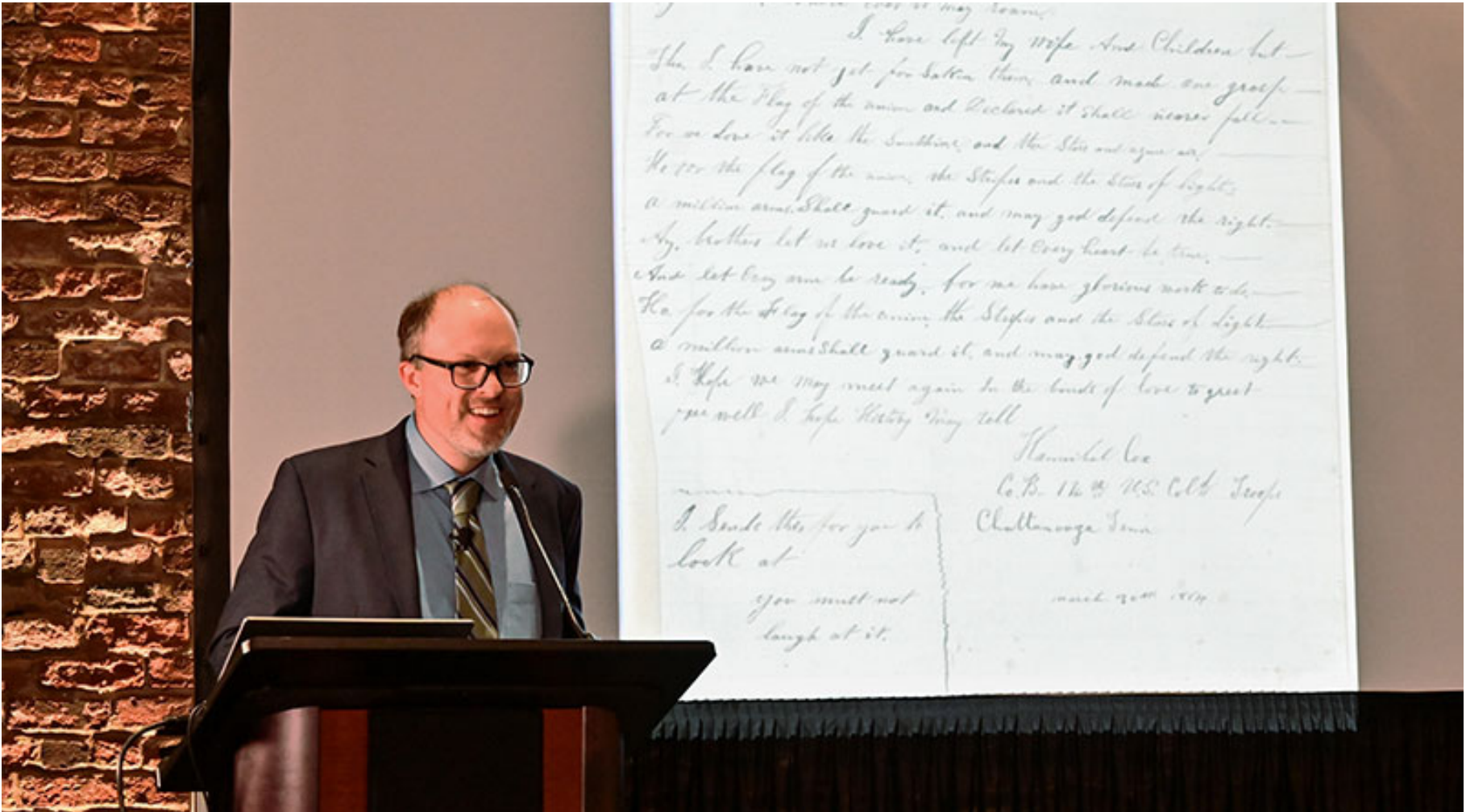


NEWSROOM

[Home](#) / [News](#) / [2024](#) / [January](#) / When Abe Lincoln Ignored the Stares and Whispers



WHEN ABE LINCOLN IGNORED THE STARES AND WHISPERS

NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON PROFESSOR JONATHAN WHITE'S RESEARCH

by [Kelley McGee](#) | January 12, 2024

Read time: about 1 min

Telling riveting stories about Abraham Lincoln's White House behavior, American Studies Professor and Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize winner Dr. Jonathan White delivered the keynote address at the American Civil War Museum's inaugural Lincoln Prize Lecture.

The event was created to honor White and future winners of the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize. The Lincoln Prize is considered to be the most prestigious award recognizing extraordinary scholarly works focused on the life of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War.

White discussed his award-winning book, "A House Built by Slaves, African American Visitors to the Lincoln White House," with a packed audience that included Virginia Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera, members of the General Assembly, President Kelly, and many other dignitaries. "A House Built by Slaves," which several of White's students helped research, focuses on President Lincoln's relationships and correspondence with African Americans during the Civil War, and the ways he extended his executive power to ease some of the difficulties they faced during the Civil War.

In his talk, White recalled the story of Alexander T. Augusta, an African American doctor from Norfolk, Va., who became the highest ranking Black officer in the Civil War. Despite his many accomplishments, Augusta was not allowed on a streetcar one day while traveling through Washington, D.C. Some 90 years before Rosa Parks made headlines for refusing to give up her seat on a bus, Augusta's streetcar incident went on to become national news.

The story was featured in newspapers around the country, and even debated on the U.S. Senate floor. Augusta refused to suffer this indignity quietly, and he proudly claimed the rights of U.S. citizenship by going to the White House with a fellow Black surgeon to meet President Lincoln. When he arrived, Lincoln welcomed him warmly into a reception, White said, despite the stares and whispers from white people in attendance.

“When Lincoln noticed, he eagerly approached Alexander Augusta, went up to him and shook his hand,” White said.

In addition to “A House Built by Slaves,” White is the author and editor of 16 other books on Lincoln and the Civil War Era, including a brand-new children’s book, “My Day with Abe Lincoln,” that was illustrated by CNU art student Madeline Renaux. You can watch White’s Lincoln Prize Lecture at the American Civil War Museum below, which starts at 6:10.

A House Built By Slaves: African Americans in the ...

