

Letters from Mary Todd Lincoln to Abraham Lincoln

This letter from Mary to President Lincoln shows many details of Mary that are sometimes forgotten or unknown. Mary, at times, is thought of as a person who has very little regard for the feelings of others and is mainly concerned with her own interests. Through this letter we can see that Mary, like Lincoln himself, has a soft side and genuine concern for the well being of others. Mary and Abraham's relationship may be of a more positive nature than sometimes alluded to by some historians.

From Mary Todd Lincoln to Abraham Lincoln¹, [November 3, 1862]

My Dear Husband.

I wrote you on yesterday, yet omitted a very important item.² Elizabeth Keckley,³ who is with me and is working for the Contraband Association, at Wash-- is authorised by the White part of the concern by a written document -- to collect any thing for them -- here that, she can-- She has been very unsuccessful-- She says the immense number of Contrabands in W-- are suffering intensely, many without bed covering & having to use any bits of carpeting to cover themselves-- Many dying of want-- Out of the \$1000 fund deposited with you by Gen Corcoran, I have given her the privelege of investing \$200 her, in bed covering-- She is the most deeply grateful being, I ever saw, & this sum, I am sure, you will not object to being used in this way-- The cause of humanity requires it -- and there will be \$800 left of the fund-- I am sure, this will meet your approbation-- The soldiers are well supplied with comfort Please send check for \$200 -- out of that fund -- she will bring you on the bill.

Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Mary address this letter?
2. What does this tell you about her relationship to the president?
3. How can you tell that Mary is concerned for other people? Give examples.
4. What does she say about the soldiers? What does this mean?
5. Who was Elizabeth Keckley? Why was she important to Mary?
6. Did Mary and Elizabeth Keckley have a continuing relationship? If so, describe. (You will need to do further research to answer this question)