

Thank you so much KMHA members for sponsoring me to attend the AASLH annual meeting in Louisville this year themed “The Power of Possibility”. What a wonderful opportunity to be around so much expertise and experience in the field! This was my first national meeting in the field, and in fact, my organization, McDowell House Museum, had never sent anyone to a national AASLH meeting before. We are a small museum and our operating budget is just a little over \$100,000. My director, Carol Senn, who has worked at the museum for over 35 years, was so enthused when she heard I’d been awarded the professional development scholarship!

The meeting included the chance to hear speakers and presenters from all across the country from Sam Wineburg of Stanford University to Kentucky legend Wendell Berry. However, my personal favorite was someone that does not have name or even necessarily organization recognition. The stand out speaker of the conference for me was Callie Hawkins at “Is History Relevant? Then Let’s Do Something About It!”. Ms. Hawkins works for Lincoln’s Cottage, a site that is about a decade old in the Washington, D.C. area. The site is focused on Abraham Lincoln’s ideas. Her presentation focused on SOS, a student organization centered out of their historic site. SOS stands for Students Opposing Slavery, but it isn’t about students opposing historic slavery. It’s devoted to training students in opposing modern day slavery.

Her site’s story about fighting modern day slavery by rallying students with Abraham Lincoln’s ideas and site was amazing. Here is a quote from a SOS participant from India, “...when I went inside Lincoln’s Cottage, I felt as if Lincoln...he talked about his unfinished work, you know. He understood that slavery hadn’t completely ended. I feel that he was passing the torch on to us.”

We are obviously all in the field because we love history, but if you hear about something like SOS, you may never think the same way about the possibilities of our field again. Lincoln isn’t just enshrined at Lincoln’s Cottage, his ideas are alive and still affecting change.

And that embodies this year’s AASLH meeting theme “The Power of Possibility”.