

Thomas Jefferson MONTICELLO

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Americans celebrate their new citizenship
at the 2014 naturalization ceremony.

From the President

Dear Friends,

In the midst of Campaign 2016, this edition's cover story takes us back to the election of 1800, when Thomas Jefferson faced political rival John Adams in one of the toughest presidential contests in American history.

My favorite part of the story is how it ends. In a climate of bitter partisanship, Jefferson used his first inaugural address to call for national unity – reminding his fellow countrymen that their shared identity as "brethren of the same principles" should outweigh "every difference of opinion."

Identity is a funny thing – incredibly powerful, but hard to define. What unites us as a people? What constitutes our collective DNA? What makes us American?

Monticello is one place where we can ask – and perhaps begin to answer – these essential questions. It is the three-dimensional autobiography of the Founding Father who gave us our mission statement in the Declaration of Independence: *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.* It is the best-documented, best-preserved and best-studied plantation in North America, forever imprinted with the stories of the enslaved

individuals who lived and labored here.

Monticello embodies the complexity of the American story – our boldest ideas, and our most tragic failure.

As many of you know, on Independence Day we gather on the mountaintop – surrounded by the lessons of our past – to reflect on what it means to be American. We welcome new citizens, who participate in what is now the oldest U.S. naturalization ceremony conducted outside of a courtroom. Each year, we also have the chance to hear from a prominent American on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

July 4 at Monticello is a celebration of the American people and the spirit that binds them. In Jefferson's words, "whatever they can, they will" – an uplifting thought at a time when our country can seem irrevocably divided.

We hope you'll be able to join us this year, when renowned political analyst Dr. Larry Sabato will offer the keynote address.

Until then,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Leslie Greene Bowman".

Leslie Greene Bowman,
President and CEO