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Although the diverse passions of the people are a facet of American society, they often constitute a threat to American unity. George Washington knew this when he warned against political parties in his farewell address, James Madison knew it when he opposed factions in *Federalist 10*, and Abraham Lincoln knew it when he saw dissension escalating as the Civil War approached. When Lincoln was inaugurated, just a month before war broke out, he spoke of the unity that America must maintain, even in times of internal conflict. President Joe Biden proclaimed the same sentiment at his inaugural speech in 2021, over a century later, and it remains as relevant as ever.

When Abraham Lincoln delivered his first inaugural address on March 4, 1861, it was clear that the decades of conflict which had furthered the polarization between the Northern and Southern United States could no longer be dismissed by the federal government. Public officials were fearful of the political and cultural effects of acknowledging the issue of slavery, motivating its omission from the Constitution and lack of resolution in acts such as the Missouri Compromise. But, by the time of Lincoln's inauguration, the U.S. had been rapidly expanding, and demands for concrete government action concerning slavery were growing from plantation-owning southerners and northern abolitionists alike. While Lincoln's speech continued the pattern of public officials failing to take a definitive stance on slavery, he reiterated the primary purpose of the American government: to defend liberty.

This was the same issue that the founding fathers grappled with almost a century prior to Lincoln's presidency. How could the United States government ensure national security while protecting the liberty of its citizens? How could they guarantee that the country would not be torn apart by dissenting opinions while still preserving the people's right to express themselves? This concept has maintained relevance, from the founding of the United States to Lincoln's presidency to modern America. The First Amendment is a pillar of our society, but the freedom granted by the Constitution has repeatedly created the inevitable conflict that comes with the varying opinions of outspoken individuals.

In the 21st century, technology has bolstered the ability of Americans to express their ideas and find like-minded individuals to rally together in support of their cause. The internet and social media have created platforms for movements to grow more quickly than ever before. In Lincoln's time, the abolitionist movement took decades to become massively influential and depended on the courage and commitment of a few passionate individuals. Leaders such as William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and Angelina Grimke risked their lives for the cause and dedicated their time to writing and speaking out against slavery. The abolitionist movement relied on the formation of several small groups dispersed geographically throughout the United States to spread their message to as many people as possible and persuade others to join the cause. Movements today can grow seemingly overnight, expanding from the passions of a few to an international call to action. Social media posts can lead to a substantial following, which can lead to national media attention, which can lead to support from across the country and the globe. The Black Lives Matter movement began less than ten years ago and has quickly become one of the most prominent social movements of this generation, with supporters from around the world continuing to fight to reform the racial injustice inherent in our nation. This massive potential for influence has made the government's role in protecting the rights of the people more important than ever before. While expressing opinions to vast audiences is becoming increasingly simple, the government must continue to strike a balance between preserving liberty and protecting our country.

As Americans, it is crucial that we reflect upon and learn from our history. We have seen discordance brewing in our country before and know the consequences that a lack of communication and understanding can generate. We have faced many difficulties as a nation and are continuing to pursue recovery from our worst failures. To maintain the unity that upholds American society, we must be able not only to acknowledge opinions opposite to our own but to communicate among dissenting groups in search of common ground and compromise. It is not enough to say that you hear the opposition; you must actively pursue an understanding of all sides of a given issue. Debate and discussion are essential elements of American democracy and the means of pursuing the strengthened unity demanded by the most influential leaders of our society.

Lincoln's words were relevant long before his time and will continue to be relevant throughout the future of the United States. Liberty can never be debilitated by the American

government, and varying passions should be celebrated, not discouraged. Freedom was the reason why the Pilgrims came to America, freedom was the reason why our Constitution was written, and freedom is the reason that we continue to fight for our beliefs and values today. Although a daunting challenge, preserving both security and liberty is the necessary task of the American government. Our freedom to disagree serves not to create enemies but to create friends.