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Introduction

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln became the first Republican to ever win the presidential election. Before he was elected president, he was living in Springfield, Illinois. Since he was the soon to be president of the United States he needed to go to Washington D.C. where he would lead the country. Before leaving to go to Washington, Abraham Lincoln gave a speech to the people of Springfield, Illinois which was entitled “His Farewell Address.” In this address, he indicated that he owed everything to the people of Springfield and that he could not fail at the job he was given. During this speech, Abraham Lincoln says this, “Let us neither express, nor cherish, any harsh feeling towards any citizen who, by his vote, has differed with us. Let us at all times remember that all American citizens are brothers of a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.”

Meaning

The above quote was meant to show acceptance. Abraham Lincoln’s goal was to acknowledge that not everyone was going to be pleased that he won the election, but that it was important for him and his supporters to respect the opinions of those who did not vote for him. Wealthy people living in the south were especially upset about Lincoln becoming president because he was anti-slavery and they made most of their living from slavery. As the future president, it was important for him to show that they were all still “brothers of a common country.” He wanted them to understand that they still needed to show respect and kindness towards one another no

matter their vote. He believed that no matter what, American democracy meant equal rights and equality of opportunity. This was an enlightened perspective. It highlighted the importance of mutual respect and communicated the view that unity was still possible despite the differing perspectives represented in the country. Lincoln's view is even more important today given the current state of affairs in U.S. politics, which is the most divisive it has been since the civil war.

Opinion

I agree with the statement made by Abraham Lincoln with respect to the importance of acceptance and unity; it is especially critical now because I believe that as a country we are too divided. There are two very clear sides politically, with some people from each side having extremely negative feelings towards the other side. It is uncommon to see many citizens who identify as far right republicans and as far left democrats interact, or do so in a way that is kind or respectful. The main problem with this sort of division is that there is a lack of middle ground and civility which creates a lack of consensus.

I believe that everyone should be accepting of one another and treat everyone equally and with respect. For this reason, I agree with Abraham Lincoln's statement; it should make people consider how they treat one another when they disagree on policy.

Relevance

Abraham Lincoln's statement about unity despite differences resonates today because his message has been lost. The presidential election in 2020 between Joe Biden and Donald Trump

highlighted political differences in a way that had not been evident previously. Both politicians had extremely opposing views with respect to policies such as climate change, taxes, loan forgiveness, and immigration, which brought about a lot of division in the United States, or revealed how significant those differences were, especially in particular parts of the country. Conversations focused on who voted and agreed with Trump's policies and who voted and agreed with Biden's policies. Tensions rose due to the polarity of the ideas represented by both political leaders. People were unkind, harsh, unaccepting, and at times even aggressive towards people who did not share the same belief or views. The division, distrust, and strongly negative feelings, including hate has continued to increase and is evident in 2023.

The civility and unity that is communicated in the quote from the speech Abraham Lincoln gave in Springfield, Illinois was reflected in how politicians and citizens alike behaved since his speech. However, since the 2016 and the 2020 election it has made the divide even clearer. In the past, political parties were not associated with values, but this election changed that. Having a differing political view today can be seen as having a different view on human rights and freedoms. This puts a spotlight on Abraham Lincoln's quote because it shows how we need to revert back to a structure where opposing political views do not mean opposing values when what matters is equality and community. If this were to be the case, it would be even easier to implement Lincoln's ideas where people would be more embracing and accepting of each other.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Lincoln's quote was very wise; he found a way to tackle an important issue by

simultaneously showing why he was a good choice for being president and demonstrating regard for all opinions and people. Even if people did not vote for him, it let them consider why they were choosing to express harmful and negative words when we should all be coming together as communities. The most important part of this quote is, “should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.” Hopefully, there can be a time soon where people take this into consideration and embrace it again.