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Voice Of Democracy Essay

American History: Our Hope for the Future

One morning in April of 2015, the morning bell rang and a voice came over the loudspeaker, "Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance." Like any other morning, I set down my book and rose for the Pledge. But I soon realized that this was no ordinary morning. To my surprise, I was the only one standing – and the entire class was staring at me. A nearby friend whispered, "Sit down. We are protesting the death of Freddie Gray by refusing to say the pledge." Although only a few seconds passed, they moved very slowly. I had been following the news, and I understood why my classmates remained seated. Yet, my allegiance to the principles of liberty, justice and equality found in our Pledge are not conditional, nor is my respect for those who gave their lives fighting for those principles. What better time to proclaim my support of these principles, I thought, than when events threaten to undermine them? I respect my classmates who sat silent that day, but I remained standing to reaffirm my commitment to an indivisible republic that ensures liberty and justice to all, equally.

I often reflect on that day. The news is full of examples of American individuals and institutions falling short of our Founding Ideals, but I continue to draw the same conclusion as I did that day: it is in the midst of divisions and strife that we most need to profess our allegiance to each other and to the principles of our Nation's Founding.

The thirteen colonies were not inherently united; like the fabrics of a flag in its early stages of creation, they were loosely pinned together, but not sewn. Our founding documents –

the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights -- serve as interfacing; they stabilize and provide a source of durability to the entire work. And the sacrifice paid by those who gave their lives to win our freedoms unites us in a common debt.

The Founders followed patterns inspired by the Enlightenment, which in turn inspired immigrants to flock to America with hopes for greater freedoms and opportunities. The nation these immigrants found was far from perfect, but because they believed in our founding principles, they stayed and worked to make it better. While it hasn't always been seamless, America has successfully incorporated people from all around the globe into the unique fabric of its national identity. At times, such as the Civil War and Jim Crow, inequalities, divisions, and tensions have torn at the fabric of the American banner, threatening to divide it permanently. Leaders of the Abolitionist, Civil Rights, and Female Suffrage movements recognised our nation's shortcomings and labored diligently to repair our union, stitch by stitch. Everyday citizens help reinforce and iron out the wrinkles in our society as they stand up for the principles of freedom, equality, and unity. Members of the military risk and give their lives to protect the liberties we cherish. Each part of our ensign, being united in purpose, is made by the people for the people.

America is the story of a nation struggling to live up to the inspired principles proclaimed at its founding. The more we show our commitment to ensuring "liberty and justice for all," the closer we grow together, and the more indivisible we become. Our hope for America's future is dependent on its citizens' allegiance to these core principles. Only then can we remain, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "the last best hope of earth." Now there's something worth standing for.