We are often preached to about the importance of respectful and considerate behavior, yet when this behavior is expected of us we regularly fail to uphold these values. Civility is the ability to connect with others in a proper manner. Every day, we are faced with issues ranging from interpersonal drama to the climate crisis, and it seems as though incivility has taken center stage in all of these issues. Most conversations about these crucial issues often conclude with people feeling agitated, self-righteous, and indignant. We cannot simply pretend these life-altering issues do not exist, yet it seems as though we will never solve them if we allow incivility to plague our conversations and lives. Civility stands as a foundation for democracy in the United States, yet incivility becomes more prominent day by day, but we are able to challenge this growing issue by lessening our defensiveness and improving our argumentative literacy.

Even in 1885, Abraham Lincoln was aware that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." In the current age, rather than stabilizing the nation on the foundations of its creation, we have decided to rely solely on two feeble political parties. Regardless of how clear an issue may be, each side of the spectrum is exclusively concerned with the inner workings of the other side rather than focusing on what is important—the issue itself. We can see this fundamental issue infesting millions of daily conversations about pressing matters such as climate change, economics, societal structure, and education. These issues cannot remain on the back burner as citizens continue to fight. Millions of people continue to suffer from issues concerning poverty, lack of opportunity, and severe illness as conversations drift away from their focus in favor of breeding anger. Individuals often work tirelessly to ensure their voice overpowers the voices of their fellow citizens, yet this could not be further from what the Founding Fathers wanted. Our government was designed to divide its power among all citizens to avoid suppressing any

individual wishing to speak their mind. This is frequently forgotten during conversations in today's day in age.

Fixing an issue is impossible without delving into the origin of the primary problem. One of the many causes of this issue is an invisible, destructive issue often left unaddressed in our rapidly moving society—declining mental health. According to Sarah M. Szymkowicz, "Subclinical Apathy is found in 35% of the population." While apathy is not a diagnosis it is often an indicator of a decline in mental health, and if millions of people do not feel as though anything is of importance, discussions of pivotal issues will lose their importance. Another core cause of this issue is a severe lack of media literacy skills in the general population. Peter Dizikes of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—a pioneer in the development of modern technology—has made it known that " false rumors spread faster and wider than true information." Social media sites allow unfiltered information to appear on the screens of hundreds of millions of people, and many of those people will be unable to detect when they are viewing blatant falsehoods. Truth is rarely the objective of important discussions. Many individuals find vindication necessary, so they will attempt to force others to comply with their misinformed worldview which hinders civility and promotes extremism and incivility. All United States citizens share responsibility for this growing issue as we all are capable of educating ourselves and others on the truth, yet we often choose to avoid involving ourselves in tricky matters. The issue will only worsen if we remain dormant in the face of false information, but it is so much easier to watch the destruction from a distance while remaining unaware of the fact that the destruction is shaking the foundation on which you stand.

It is unwise to air out grievances without attempting to resolve the issue at hand. We must address our everlasting mental health crisis to restore a sense of stability in people's lives. Most

importantly, we must incorporate media literacy courses into as many schools as possible. Individuals must be able to determine when they are staring at misinformation, and if children are placed on social media sites at a young age they must be able to sort through what is false. Teaching children to learn to exclusively seek the truth rather than conform to bias will prevent extremism within youth which will prevent ego from taking center stage in discussions. We must recenter what is important in the conversations we must have to prevent the further suffering of those around us. Learning in schools not just how to think but how to express what you think is not simply an enriching experience, it is essential to creating a well-adjusted person. Civility can be restored in this country if we all decide to educate ourselves on the beautiful art of discussion.

The United States has been faced with thousands of issues and we have never failed to overcome hardship. We have succeeded in our endeavors through our ability to listen to others through civil discussion. During the Constitutional Conventions of the 1700s, citizens of the nation were able to come together to work toward a common goal in order to free the United States from overbearing British control. Without this civility, we would have presented as weak to the British forces which would have never granted us the independence we celebrate today. If we fail to continue to regain civility we will be unable to propel our nation to levels not yet seen before. It is essential we uphold this basic principle in order to do what we have always done as a nation despite all hardships—succeed.

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