

Rotary Words of Inspiration  
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By Graham Gillette

Divisive partisanship has stymied our national progress causing many to retreat into the false safety of groups populated only by those with whom they agree. Such isolation breeds a ruinous my-way-or-no-way type of thinking. Splitting into self-chosen tribes is counter to the fundamental ideals upon which our nation was founded. The final line of the Declaration of Independence reads, “we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” This pledge is broken every time any sub-group tries to stifle those who vote, live, look, worship, or love differently than they do.

At some point during our great American experiment, far too many of us allowed political ideology to grow into party allegiance. We perpetuate a system of government that rewards those who promote the extreme and penalizes those who seek the middle ground.

The troubles and opportunities we face in the 21st Century as community members, as Iowans, as Americans, and as citizens of the world are not black and white, or red and blue. The very idea of bipartisanship may be flawed, for it assumes there are only two ways of thinking, only two approaches to problem-solving. And, worse, the elevation of the parties handed power to those who protect party first and serve country second. If our speakers today and all of us rededicate ourselves to continue working in the interest of the people instead of maneuvering to amass power to benefit the few, progress can resume. Change starts here with us.

America’s vast potential remains. Together we can realize it. We must repledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor to each other not because we are the same or because we chose the same party but because the American ideal that every person is equal binds us – we are in this together.

Progress will not arise from a series of binary choices regarding when to veer left or right. Only with arms linked and eyes focused on the horizon will we reach the promise of America’s dawn.