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Abraham Lincoln's Words Explained

"Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it." (Abraham Lincoln, 1860) This statement was made during the Cooper Union Address, in which Abraham Lincoln brought up the immorality of slavery. A few months after delivering the address Lincoln was chosen as the Republican Nominee for the Presidency. In the address, Lincoln encourages Americans to take action on abolishing slavery and to not be reticent about it. "If slavery is right, all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it, are themselves wrong, and should be silenced, and swept away." (Abraham Lincoln, 1860) Furthermore the "right" in the quote refers to anti-slavery, and "duty" refers to the task of ending slavery in America. The meaning behind Lincoln's words can be perceived through those definitions.

The first half is to be considered as "Let us have faith that right makes might..." This half can be thought of as meaning, *be faithful in the strength of goodwill*. "Right" should be considered

anti-slavery because Lincoln had believed that slavery was wrong, and anti-slavery was the *right* or correct way to go for the nation. Lincoln did not only want what is right, he wanted to believe that righteousness brings strength to those who are righteous. “ In the language of Mr. Jefferson, uttered many years ago, ‘It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation, and deportation, peaceably, and in such slow degrees, as that the evil will wear off insensibly; and their places be, *pari passu*, filled up by free white laborers. If, on the contrary, it is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up.’” (Abraham Lincoln, 1860) Not all Americans believed in abolishing slavery as Lincoln did, which meant that those who opposed slavery suffered from constant criticism. Therefore the Cooper Union Address encourages slave abolitionists to believe in the righteousness of their abolitionist cause.

The second half is “...and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.” An interpretation of this is, *...with that belief, follow through on what is right*. As mentioned previously, Lincoln desired to end slavery. Many others did not share his viewpoint, so he and those who disliked slavery were harassed. Lincoln was afraid that this resistance could disband slave-abolitionists, so he encouraged people to continue voicing against slavery despite retaliation. “Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government nor of dungeons to ourselves.” (Abraham Lincoln, 1860) Lincoln wished that slave-abolitionists would actively voice their opinions on slavery with confidence. As a result, “...and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.” means, *with that belief, follow through on what is right*.

Abraham Lincoln’s quote relates to me despite the fact that I was not there to hear it. As a first-generation American, his words mean a great deal to me. Growing up in a household with my parents who started a new life in America, I have been raised with occasionally different

cultural values and ways of life; thus, my way of thinking will occasionally differ from those of my peers. The things which I disagree on with others are never as important as whether the United States should dissolve slavery or not, but Lincoln's words are relatable. If my values are ethically sound, then I do well to have faith in myself and my beliefs. Giving in to other's opinions or established ways of thinking would be a poor decision. However, if I am wrong, then the truth will eventually win out and I will have learned from my misconceptions. Lincoln even manages to prove this: "In 1784, three years before the Constitution - the United States then owning the Northwestern Territory, and no other, the Congress of the Confederation had before them the question of prohibiting slavery in that Territory; and four of the "thirty-nine" who afterward framed the Constitution, were in that Congress, and voted on that question." (Abraham Lincoln, 1860). The founding fathers had questioned instituting slavery in the United States, and indeed by 1860 this topic came to light again. This happened because "*right makes might*"; the righteous way will surface over the wrong. I can attest to this since I live in a United States without slavery.

I do not think that anyone would call the world 'perfect.' Thus, Lincoln's quote is applicable to modern society. There is wrong in the world, and we must stand up for what is right. This is very easily said, because some people are persecuted for what is right. We must remember Lincoln's quote though. When someone opposes our perception or view, we must ask ourselves if we feel confident in ourselves, and pursue our beliefs if we do. As mentioned before, being right has strength, which means that the righteous will emerge victorious. People are fighting for good all around the world, and their success is guaranteed due to their righteous cause.

