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Civility Is Not a Dirty Word

When speaking about The Great Divide in our country today, I'm certain it's not about the 1950's Western movie starring Kirk Douglas, or a reference to the hydrological system that directs our rivers to the oceans. The Great Divide today is about the polarized and insular way in which we've become a nation that talks at each rather than to each other. As shocking as it sounds, I know a father and son who no longer speak to each other because of a Facebook post during the 2016 election. Although social media can be a great tool, it has become the perfect platform for bullies. Through the anonymity of the internet, even the unlikely are enticed to type things they would never say face-to-face.

Our founding fathers embraced the value of differing opinions and ideologies, and they insightfully ensured ongoing change, cooperation and compromise when laying the framework of our great country. Through civil discourse, they hammered out the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, and for over 200 years we have enjoyed the privilege and freedom of fearlessly voicing our opinions. Why then in the 21st century have we chosen to be a nation of division and intolerance?

The dictionary describes civility as politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech. John F. Kennedy, in his inaugural address at the height of the Cold War, described civility as a means to begin anew, and not a sign of weakness. It's time for us to begin anew by embracing the passion and engagement shown in voters today - a healthy sign of democracy that leads to innovation, change, and the greater good. We have already proven that we are a country that can rise above a nation divided, and we have come too far to give up on each other. Let us continue to have spirited debates on the merits of the issues, but let us stop the personal attacks that stifle progress. Civility is key to closing The Great Divide. Let's get down to the business of mending the civic framework of our country one conversation at a time.

