On January 20, 2021, the world watched as President Joe R. Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris were sworn in at the United States Capitol. The small gathering was appropriately distanced, observing the protocols required for the pandemic. This was a historic moment on many fronts.

It was not lost on me, as I watched the ceremony and pondered the election, that a mere two weeks before on January 6th, as the U.S. Congress gathered to ratify the vote of the Electoral College, a rioting mob had attacked the very building that served as the iconic backdrop for the inauguration.

As President Biden addressed the nation for the first time, he declared his intention to be a unifying force for the country, saying: “To overcome these challenges – to restore the soul and to secure the future of America – requires more than words. It requires that most elusive of things in a democracy: Unity.”

In 1776 as the United Stated of America was being formed, the suggestion was made that the motto of the new nation should be *E pluribus unum* – out of many, one. The motto was later adopted as a part of the Great Seal of the United States. Perhaps it is time to revisit and reaffirm these words as we consider what it means to hold the diversities that are reflective of this country as we seek unity in days, weeks, and months to come.

“Out of many, one” points to the diversity that is possible even in a vision for unity. Unity does not require uniformity: we all don’t have to look alike, dress alike, think alike, or even speak the same language for unity to exist and flourish among us. We can retain the uniqueness of who we are, while holding common values and assumptions as a nation. The traditions that reflect the uniqueness of the places from whence we came as immigrants to this land bring us joy and pride, while connecting us to the past and our identities.
The great divide among us has to be addressed in ways that allow us to be respectful in hearing each other’s opinions and welcoming the full breadth of the diversities that are present in the US. Rather than dividing us, the differences that each of us brings to the table adds deep rich texture to the fabric that represents who we are as citizens and residents of this country. Unity means we understand ourselves as a whole, joined together. One people.

“This is our historic moment of crisis and challenge, and unity is the path forward. And, we must meet this moment as the United States of America. If we do that, I guarantee you, we will not fail. We have never, ever, ever failed in America when we have acted together. And so today, at this time and in this place, let us start afresh. All of us. Let us listen to one another. Hear one another. See one another. Show respect to one another.” – President Joseph R. Biden, 46th President of the United States

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