

Blue Jean Nation 'So long Abe'

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Lincoln defined government as “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” We need Lincoln’s spirit now more than ever.

ALTOONA, WI - No dictionary ever captured the essence of democracy’s meaning better than Abe Lincoln did in his legendary Gettysburg Address. Lincoln defined it as government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

For a century and a half after the Civil War the Republican Party was the party of Lincoln. Today’s GOP, however, has separated from Lincoln and the relationship seems destined to end in divorce. Modern-day Republicans have rejected Lincoln’s commitment to equality as they flirted for decades before eventually jumping in bed with white supremacy. They also have renounced Lincoln’s idea of democracy. For years now the likes of [Rush Limbaugh](#) have been saying over and over again that America is a republic, not a democracy. And dittoheads across the country [dutifully repeat](#) the mantra.

It’s silly to argue over whether America is one or the other when we were so [obviously intended to be both](#)

. The U.S. was set up to be a democratic republic. The republic the founders gave us also can accurately be described as a representative democracy or a constitutional democracy. The founders wisely and ingeniously struck a balance between majority rule by elected representatives of the people and protection of individual and minority rights by rule of constitutional law. To say we are a republic but not a democracy is to not only disregard the true meaning of these words but also to disrespect the founders’ delicate balancing act.

They understandably wanted no more to do with monarchy and sought to replace a king's rule with democracy. But they also were rightly fearful of mob rule and felt the need to temper the democratic will with "inalienable" rights for individuals that could not be voted out of existence. They did a better job designing the system than we have done taking care of it. While some among us waste time bickering about whether America is a republic or a democracy, evidence mounts that we may [no longer be worthy](#) of either name.

At a time when the republic faced perhaps the greatest threat to its continued existence, Lincoln gave the country not only the perfect definition of democracy but also reason to believe a new birth of freedom in America was possible. In our time, all of us — whether Republican, Democrat, independent or something else — need to channel our inner Lincolns and dedicate ourselves to a new birth of democracy and equality. We need to figure out how to restore government of the people, by the people and for the people. We need to imagine an economy that is of the people, by the people and for the people and strive to make it so.

We need Lincoln's spirit now more than ever. The party of Lincoln has waved goodbye to Abe. The rest of us need to summon him back.

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