

[CHAPTER I]

Democracy's Ecosystem

So, two cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough: there is no occasion to give three.

—E. M. FORSTER, *Two Cheers for Democracy*¹

The thing about democracy, beloveds, is that it is not neat, orderly, or quiet. It requires a certain relish for confusion.

—MOLLY IVINS, *You Got to Dance with Them What Brung You*²

For nearly an hour, we had been driving the back roads of southern Minnesota, past acre after acre of corn lined up in orderly, tedious, and mind-numbing rows. As we crested a hill, my friend broke the silence: “Check it out.”

Afloat in the sea of uniformity called American agribusiness was an island of wind-blown grasses and wildflowers, a riot of colors and textures to delight the eye. We got out of the car and walked through this patch of prairie my friend had helped restore, dotted with the kinds of plants whose names make a found poem: wild four o'clock, bastard toadflax, Ohio horse mint, prairie Indian plantain. After some silence, my friend spoke again, saying something like this:

There are more than one hundred fifty species of plants on this prairie—to say nothing of the insects, birds, and mammals they attract—just as there were before we first broke the sod and started

farming. It's beautiful, of course, but that's not the whole story. Biodiversity makes an ecosystem more creative, productive, adaptive to change, and resilient in the face of stress. The agribusiness land we've been driving through provides us with food and fuel. But we pay a very steep price for this kind of monoculture. It saps the earth's vitality and puts the quality and sustainability of our food supply at risk. The prairie as it once was—a state to which it can be restored—has a lot to teach us about how we need to live.

American democracy at its best is like that island of restored prairie. In a world where human diversity is often suppressed—where authoritarian regimes have kept people lined up like rows of cultivated corn, harvesting their labor and sometimes their lives to protect the interests of the state—the diversity that grows in a democracy delights the heart as well as the eye.

Our diversity consists only in part of demographic differences such as race, ethnicity, and social class. Equally important are the wildly different lenses through which we see, think, and believe. At the center of America's public life is a marketplace of ideas that only a free people could create, a vital, colorful, chaotic bazaar of religious, philosophical, political, and intellectual convictions. When democracy is working as it should, it is a complex and confusing mess where we can think and act as we choose, within the rule of law; can generate social and technological advances via the creative conflict of ideas; and can still manage to come together for the sake of the common good.

Just as a virgin prairie is less efficient than agribusiness land, democracy is less efficient than a dictatorship. We often move too slowly on matters of moral or practical urgency. And yet this loss of efficiency is more than offset by the way human diversity, freely expressed, can strengthen the body politic—offering resilience in the face of threat, adaptability to change, creativity and productivity in everything from commerce to science to culture.

I say *can*, not *will*, strengthen us because human beings have problems with diversity that have never vexed the wildflowers. A recent

study by the political scientist Robert Putnam shows that demographic diversity can weaken a community's resourcefulness.³ In the words of the journalist Michael Jonas, "The study, the largest ever on civic engagement in America, found that virtually all measures of civic health are lower in more diverse settings."⁴

Putnam's study tells us nothing new about human nature, which includes an ancient fear of "the other." In the face of diversity, we feel tension—and that, in turn, can lead to discomfort, distrust, conflict, violence, and even war. So we have developed a variety of strategies to evade our differences, strategies that only deepen our fear, such as associating exclusively with "our own kind" or using one of our well-tested methods to dismiss, marginalize, demonize, or eliminate the stranger. When our ancient fear of otherness is left unacknowledged, unattended, and untreated, diversity creates dysfunctional communities, as Putnam's study reminds us. The benefits of diversity can be ours only if we hold our differences with respect, patience, openness, and hope, which means we must attend to the invisible dynamics of the heart that are part of democracy's infrastructure.

For example, we regard "tension" as a condition to be relieved, not an energy to hold in our hearts. Tension creates stress, which leads to ill health, so we must reduce or eliminate these enemies of well-being. That is good advice if our stress comes from a toxic workplace, an abusive relationship, or some other assault on body or soul. But the stress that comes from being stretched by alien ideas, values, and experiences is of a different sort. This is why some psychologists distinguish between *distress* (which is negative and destructive), and *eustress* (which is positive and a prod to growth). It is important to know the difference. Positive stress may try our patience, and yet it can help our hearts become more spacious and generous. Refuse to hold stress of this sort, and our society as well as our souls will suffer from shrinkage and stagnation.

Once again, Abraham Lincoln offers a case in point. His life was laced with the stress that comes from being hounded by darkness; high anxiety and high blood pressure are among the well-known companions of depression. Lincoln had easy access to an array of popular

therapies, such as opium, the water cure, or visits to a mesmerist. And yet he rejected all of these ways of numbing or evading the inner darkness that he needed to acknowledge, embrace, and integrate.⁵

For therapy, Lincoln turned instead to poetry and humor—poetry to reflect on the human condition and humor to keep it in perspective. In this way, as his biographer, Joshua Shenk, points out, Lincoln “did not dampen, but rather highlighted, the essential tension of his life.”⁶ He chose to engage rather than evade the sources of his stress. Evasion would have diverted him from “his desire to do something meaningful” with his life, draining him of energy for the pursuit.⁷

Diversity, Tension, and Democracy

When we choose to engage, not evade, the tension of our differences, we will become better equipped to participate in a government of, by, and for the people as we expand some of our key civic capacities:⁸

- To listen to each other openly and without fear, learning how much we have in common despite our differences
- To deepen our empathy for the alien “other” as we enter imaginatively into the experiences of people whose lives are radically unlike our own
- To hold what we believe and know with conviction *and* be willing to listen openly to other viewpoints, changing our minds if needed
- To seek out alternative facts and explanations whenever we find reason to doubt our own truth claims or the claims made by others, thus becoming better informed
- To probe, question, explore, and engage in dialogue, developing a fuller, more three-dimensional view of reality in the process
- To enter the conflicted arena of politics, able to hold the dynamics of that complex force field in ways that unite the civic community and empower us to hold government accountable to the will of the people

- To welcome opportunities to participate in collective problem solving and decision making, generating better solutions and making better decisions as we work with competing ideas⁹
- To feel more at home on the face of the earth amid differences of many sorts, better able to enjoy the fruits of diversity

Instincts and capacities like these allow us to make full use of the institutions of American democracy, institutions that were designed for creative tension-holding. From the separation of powers and system of checks and balances among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches to the tug-of-war between federal and state governments to our adversarial system of justice, American democracy was intended to generate, not suppress, the energy created by conflict, converting it into social progress as a hydroelectric plant converts the energy of dammed-up water into usable power.

But our democratic institutions are not automated. They must be inhabited by citizens and citizen leaders who know how to hold conflict inwardly in a manner that converts it into creativity, allowing it to pull them open to new ideas, new courses of action, and each other. That kind of tension-holding is the work of the well-tempered heart: if democracy is to thrive as that restored prairie is thriving, our hearts and our institutions must work in concert.

It will take me the rest of this book to explain what I mean by that claim and explore its implications. However, in less than five hundred words, I can tell you what you will *not* find in the pages to come:

- I will not prescribe a ten-step program that promises to teach the art of creative tension-holding. At the deepest levels of human life, we do not need techniques. We need insights into ourselves and our world that can help us understand how to learn and grow from our experiences of diversity, tension, and conflict. Just as Lincoln rejected the coping techniques of his time in favor of poetry and humor—which are doorways to understanding—this book attempts to offer insights that can help us hold tension well.

- I will say little about “them,” the people in Washington, D.C., on whom we like to blame our ills. My focus is on “We the People,” whose will is key to democracy. If we cannot come together with enough trust to discern the general will—and support leaders who are responsive to it while resisting the rest—we will forfeit the “Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”

- I will not complain at length about the clear and present danger to democracy posed by big money, although we need to pay close attention to those who do. As the journalist Bill Moyers has said, “The antidote, the only antidote, to the power of organized money in Washington is the power of organized people.”¹⁰

- I will not plead for tolerance, a virtue so thin it is barely a virtue: “Be of good cheer! I am willing to tolerate you!” Nor will I spend much time pleading for better manners in public discourse: manners for the sake of manners are as thin as tolerance. The civility we need will not come from watching our tongues. It will come from valuing our differences.

- I will not ask us to dial down our differences. Democracy gives us the right to disagree and is designed to use the energy of creative conflict to drive positive social change. Partisanship is not a problem. Demonizing the other side is.

- I will not demand that we become better informed, though God knows we should. Research reveals that people who are shown solid evidence contradicting their most fundamental beliefs often become more forceful in advocating those beliefs.¹¹ We will *want* the information we need in order to come closer to the truth only when we stop fearing whatever might challenge our convictions and value it instead.

- I will not issue a call for a third-party movement. What we need is a popular movement that calls on the existing political parties to honor the will of the people. But as long as distrust and contempt keep “We the People” from having a generative conversation, our will cannot be known, let alone voiced.

I am not chasing the fantasy that some day we will “all get along.” Given human nature and the nature of politics, there will always be

people with whom dialogue is impossible—and on some days I am one of them. Suppose that those who can never be reached comprise 15 or 20 percent of both the left and the right, roughly the proportion of my own extended family with whom I cannot talk politics! That leaves 60 to 70 percent of us who *can* learn to talk across our differences; in a democracy, that is more than enough to save the day.

These “statistics,” which come from the rather thin sample of my family, turn out to have historical warrant. Of the fifty-five delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, only thirty-nine signed the final document.¹² The remaining 30 percent disagreed so deeply with one part or another of the Constitution that they took a pass on posterity.

Political divides such as these are nothing new in America. Still, the depth of political rancor today has many Americans worried about the future of our democracy. According to a 2010 poll that found widespread concern about the incivility of our civic life, 95 percent of Americans “believe civility in politics is important for a healthy democracy,” and 87 percent “suggest it is possible for people to disagree about politics respectfully.”¹³

The authors summarize their findings in these words:

A core finding of our study is the potential long-term danger posed by the conduct of contemporary politics. We believe our study signals a warning: Americans do not like the way we are “doing politics,” and they believe hostility and vitriol are signs of an ailing system. Several years ago, columnist and author E. J. Dionne Jr. noted that “a nation that hates politics will not long thrive as a democracy.” We could not agree more.¹⁴

Truth, Suffering, and Hope

Heart, as I said in the Prelude, is a word that reaches far beyond our feelings. It points to a larger way of knowing—of receiving and reflecting on our experience—that goes deeper than the mind alone can take us. The heart is where we integrate the intellect with the rest of

our faculties, such as emotion, imagination, and intuition. It is where we can learn how to “think the world together,” not apart, and find the courage to act on what we know.

If you hold your knowledge of self and world wholeheartedly, your heart will at times get broken by loss, failure, defeat, betrayal, or death. What happens next in you and the world around you depends on *how* your heart breaks. If it breaks *apart* into a thousand pieces, the result may be anger, depression, and disengagement. If it breaks *open* into greater capacity to hold the complexities and contradictions of human experience, the result may be new life. The heart is what makes us human—and politics, which is the use of power to order our life together, is a profoundly human enterprise. Politics in the hands of those whose hearts have been broken open, not apart, helps us hold our differences creatively and use our power courageously for the sake of a more equitable, just, and compassionate world.

Despite my faith in what Lincoln, in his first inaugural, called the “better angels of our nature”—the beneficent powers that are released when our hearts break open—there are days when my hope for democracy’s future wanes. Bill Moyers names some of the reasons why in his lament over the current state of our political system:

Democracy in America is a series of narrow escapes, and we may be running out of luck. The reigning presumption about the American experience . . . is grounded in the idea of progress, the conviction that the present is “better” than the past and the future will bring even more improvements. For all of its shortcomings, we keep telling ourselves, “The system works.”

Now all bets are off. We have fallen under the spell of money, faction, and fear, and the great American experience in creating a different future together has been subjugated to individual cunning in the pursuit of wealth and power—and to the claims of empire with its ravenous demands and stuporous distractions. A sense of political impotence pervades the country—a mass resignation

defined by [the historian Lawrence] Goodwyn as “believing in the dogma of ‘democracy’ on a superficial public level but not believing it privately.” . . . Hope no longer seems the operative dynamic of America, and without hope we lose the talent and drive to cooperate in the shaping of our destiny.¹⁵

Moyers’s assessment is grim. And yet it is rich with the kind of truth-telling required if we are to regain hope and “cooperate in the shaping of our destiny”—democracy’s destiny. And the truth is that Americans are suffering. We suffer from a widespread loss of jobs, homes, savings, and citizen confidence in our economic and political systems. We suffer from a fear of terrorism and the paranoia it produces. We suffer from a fragmentation of community that leaves us isolated from one another. We suffer, ironically, from our indifference to those among us who suffer. And we suffer as well from a hopeless sense that our personal and collective destinies are no longer in our hands.

What shall we do with our suffering? That is one of the most fateful questions human beings must wrestle with. Sometimes suffering rises into anger that leads to murder or war; at other times it descends into despair that leads to quick or slow self-destruction. Violence is what we get when we do not know what else to do with our suffering.

But when the human heart is open and allowed to work its alchemy, suffering can generate vitality instead of violence. This is a principle that Abraham Lincoln understood from the inside out. As Joshua Shenk comments:

From his early letters lamenting the “peculiar misfortune” of his temperament, to poetry he wrote on subjects such as suicide and madness, Lincoln’s life sprang from a search for meaning that explained, and even ennobled, his affliction. As president, Lincoln urged his countrymen to accept their blessing and their burden, to see that their suffering had meaning, and to join him on a journey toward a more perfect Union.¹⁶

In my personal life, I have learned what millions have learned from crushing losses and defeats: such experiences, rightly held, can make us more compassionate and receptive, deepening our engagement with others and opening us to new life. The powers of the heart that transform personal anguish can also transform the way we do politics. The suffering that undermines democracy by driving us into foxholes and fragmenting the civic community has the potential to open us to each other, to hope, and to the hard work required to sustain the American experiment.

The John Woolman Story

If the “power of the broken heart” makes sense to you in the context of personal life but seems irrelevant to politics, consider this story of an ordinary citizen and an issue of great moral and political consequence that continues to haunt our democracy.

John Woolman (1720–1772) was a Quaker who lived in colonial New Jersey among other merchants and farmers in the Society of Friends whose affluence depended on enslaving human beings who, like them, had names and families, histories and hopes. Woolman, a tailor who did not own slaves, was torn by the blatant contradiction between the Quaker belief in human equality and the fact that many Quaker gentry were slaveholders. He refused to make that tension disappear by ignoring it, using theological sleight of hand, or riding its energy toward violence. Instead, he insisted that his community hold that tension with honesty and resolve it with integrity by freeing their slaves.

Quakers make decisions by consensus¹⁷ instead of majority rule, and Woolman’s local meeting (or congregation) was unable to reach unity on his proposal. Nonetheless, persuaded of Woolman’s absolute integrity in the matter, they agreed to support him as he pursued his concern. For the next twenty years, Woolman made frequent trips up and down the East Coast, visiting Friends in their homes and their shops, at their farms, and in their meetings. He spoke with his fellow

Quakers about the heartbreaking contradiction between their faith and their practice. And he was always true to his beliefs. He wore undyed white clothing because dye was a product of slave labor; at meals, he would fast rather than eat food prepared or served by slaves, even if he stayed to talk; and if he learned that he had inadvertently benefited from a slave's work, he would pay that person his or her due without calling attention to the exchange.

Woolman and his family paid a great price for his consistent witness to truth's imperatives and his deeply felt heartbreak. Nonetheless, he held that tension, held it for twenty long years, until Quakers became the first religious community in America to free their slaves, some eighty years before the Civil War. In 1783, Quakers petitioned the Congress to correct the "complicated evils" and "unrighteous commerce" created by the enslavement of human beings.¹⁸ And from 1827 onward, Quakers played a key role in developing the Underground Railroad, "an informal network of secret routes and safe houses used by nineteenth-century black slaves . . . to escape to free states and Canada with the aid of abolitionists who were sympathetic to their cause."¹⁹

These historic outcomes were possible because not just Woolman but the entire Quaker community held their internal contradiction consciously and constantly until they saw the light. The community, like Woolman himself, refused to resolve the matter falsely or prematurely. The Quakers did not take a quick vote to let the slave-owning majority have its way, nor did they banish the vexatious Woolman from their midst. They tested their convictions in dialogue and labored to achieve unity, trusting tension to do its work, until they finally arrived at a decision of historic proportions.

Sadly, members of the United States Congress were unwilling to hold the tension even long enough to consider the Quakers' petition of 1783. After hearing the petition read on October 8, they immediately tabled it and never took it up again. Perhaps there was too much tension in the fact that the petition invoked the Declaration of Independence, stating that the institution of slavery exists "in opposition to the solemn declaration often repeated in favor of universal liberty."²⁰

John Woolman's story allows us to distinguish once more between two kinds of heartbreak. The first is the conventional image of a heart exploded into a thousand shards. Some of us try to pick up the pieces and put our lives back together; some fall into long-term despair; some take grim satisfaction in the injury the heart's explosion inflicts on our enemies. This kind of broken heart is an unresolved wound that keeps on wounding us and others. When the heart is brittle and shatters, it can scatter the seeds of violence and multiply our suffering among others.

And yet as Woolman's story reveals, there is an alternative image for a broken heart. When the heart is supple, it can be "broken open" into a greater capacity to hold our own and the world's pain: it happens every day. When we hold our suffering in a way that opens us to greater compassion, heartbreak becomes a source of healing, deepening our empathy for others who suffer and extending our ability to reach out to them. This kind of tension-holding can plant the seeds of justice and peace, as Woolman and other exemplars of nonviolence have shown time and again.²¹

The Woolman story also underscores a point that is critical to the central thesis of this book: holding tension creatively does *not* mean indecision or inaction. At every level of human life—from living our own lives well to governing a nation justly—decisions must be made. But they must not be made in the haste that comes from being impatient with tension or in the ignorance that results from fearing the clash of diverse opinions. If the Quaker way of getting eighty years ahead of the Civil War on America's greatest moral dilemma means anything at all, it means that the broken-open, tension-holding heart is not only a powerful source of compassion and healing. It is also a source of the wisdom required to make challenging decisions well.

The impulses that make democracy possible—and those that threaten it—originate in the heart, with its complex mix of heedless self-interest and yearning for community. From there, these impulses move out into our relations with each other in families, neighborhoods, workplaces, voluntary associations, and the various settings of public life. These are the places where John Woolman made a difference simply

by walking and talking persistently *and* with principle. These are the places where we can make a difference, too, once we free ourselves from the illusion that we are at the mercy of forces beyond our control.

We normally associate “politics” with distant centers of power—legislatures, lobbyists, party caucuses, and board rooms—not with the everyday settings I just named. That is a mistake, for those places comprise the vital *prepolitical* layer of our common life, the social infrastructure on which democracy’s well-being depends. At the highest levels of institutional politics, the common good is rarely served if citizens are not speaking and acting in these local venues, gathering the collective power necessary to support the best and resist the worst of our leaders as they decide on matters that affect all of us.

Democracy depends on ordinary Americans like John Woolman, energized rather than defeated by whatever breaks their hearts, taking step after small step in local settings to contribute to the commonweal.²² As Howard Zinn wrote:

The essential ingredients of [all] struggles for justice are human beings who, if only for a moment, if only while beset with fears, step out of line and do *something*, however small. And even the smallest, most unheroic of acts adds to the store of kindling that may be ignited by some surprising circumstance into tumultuous change.²³

What Lies Ahead

In the chapters to come, I first want to deepen our understanding of what it means to practice politics from the heart. Within us is a yearning for something better than divisiveness, toxicity, passivity, powerlessness, and selling our democratic inheritance to the highest bidder. Within us is the courage to pursue that yearning, to hold life’s tensions consciously, faithfully, and well, until they break us open.

The broken-open heart is a source of power as well as compassion—the power to bring down whatever diminishes us and raise up whatever serves us well. We can access and deploy that power by doing what

every great social movement has done: *put time, skill, and energy into the education and mobilization of the powers of the heart*. As history consistently demonstrates, heart talk can yield actions just as practical as those driven by conventional forms of power.

In Chapter II, I recount some of my own journey as an American citizen. In the microcosm of my own life, I see both the darkness and the light that can be found in “We the People” writ large, reminding me that democracy is as much about *me*—and *us*—as it is the elusive *them* on whom we like to pin our problems. I introduce Alexis de Tocqueville, the French intellectual who wrote the classic *Democracy in America* after visiting the United States in 1831–1832. Early on, Tocqueville saw that American democracy would fail if generation after generation of citizens did not develop what he called the “habits of the heart” that democracy requires. By that phrase he meant deeply ingrained patterns of receiving, interpreting, and responding to experiences that involve our intellects, emotions, self-images, and concepts of meaning and purpose—habits that form the *inward and invisible infrastructure of democracy*. I name five of the habits we need if we are to hold the tuggings and tearings of life in a creative manner.

In Chapter III, I argue that the heart has always been a driver of politics, a source of inner power that gets harnessed for ends that range from good to evil. That power is amplified and released through the experience of heartbreak. But the kind of power generated depends on how the heart breaks—and the elasticity that allows it to break open instead of apart comes only through the exercise of democratic habits of the heart. In that chapter, I examine the inner emptiness of our time that manifests itself in consumerism and scapegoating, two underlying “heart conditions” we must combat if we are to develop the habits of the heart that a democracy demands.

Having made a case for role of the heart in politics, I devote the next four chapters to examining the *outward and visible infrastructure of democracy*, those spaces and settings of everyday life in which habits of the heart are formed, for better or for worse. I propose practical, on-the-ground possibilities for making better use of these venues to

learn how to hold our differences in a manner that can restore “We the People.”

In Chapter IV, I look at humanity’s long history of resisting the “fight or flight” response by inventing institutions devoted to creative tension-holding. The governing structures created by America’s founders are the crowning political achievement of this history, which will function as intended if and only if they are inhabited by people who have learned to hold tension in their hearts. Here I explore the hopeful fact that many of us find our hearts opened by the tensions of personal life and can learn to take that capacity into the public realm.

In Chapter V, I examine the public life, our everyday movement to and fro “in the company of strangers.” I explore its role in a democracy, the sources of its decline, and how we can rebuild this crucial prepolitical layer of life where the heart gets formed or deformed, almost without our knowledge. Public life is so commonplace that we take it for granted, as we do our air and water. And yet a healthy democracy is as dependent on public life as a healthy ecosystem is dependent on clean air and water: in the absence of an engaged public, democracy begins to die, and some form of oligarchy emerges to take its place.

In Chapter VI, I explore some of the traditional settings in which habits of the heart can be cultivated consciously and intentionally, such as public schools, colleges and universities, and religious communities. I propose practical ways in which these institutions, so crucial to a democracy, can reclaim their historic function of forming citizens in local settings that range from classrooms to congregations.

In Chapter VII, I examine the unsafe political space created by the mass media, a space so vast, fragmented, and frenzied that dwelling in it too long makes us feel powerless. Then I look at nontraditional spaces where citizens can find the safety to reclaim their individual and collective power. These include spaces of silence and solitude where we can remember who we are, small face-to-face circles of the sort familiar to community organizers, and certain forms of online community. In these human-scale settings, we can resist the deformations of the mass media and find the sense of voice and agency that citizenship requires.

Finally, in Chapter VIII, I take one last look at the role of the heart in human history. The history of the heart cannot be written by observing world events, but we can find important clues to it by examining the national myths that express our aspirations. I spell out the process by which social movements, including the movement called democracy, have tried to narrow the gap between aspiration and reality. Then I revisit the concept of creative tension-holding by exploring our need to stand and act in the “tragic gap,” the gap that will forever separate what *is* from what *could* and *should* be. The courage to inhabit this gap with energy, commitment, vision, and hope has been a driver of all great human experiments to fulfill the heart’s aspirations, not least the experiment called America.

If we want to reclaim democracy’s “base”—not the base that political parties must rally to win elections but “We the People” who form the foundation of American democracy itself—we need good information and all the rationality we can muster.²⁴ And yet that will not be enough. We must also develop intentional and intelligent approaches for educating and engaging the human heart, the source of what Lincoln called “the better angels of our nature” on which democracy depends.

Amid our current struggles, it is worth remembering the context in which Lincoln spoke those words that ended his first inaugural address on March 4, 1861.²⁵ It was a moment in American history when it seemed highly unlikely that the Union could endure, and the only enemy in sight was us. Five weeks later, the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter. Four murderous years after that, with 620,000 military casualties and a civilian death toll estimated at 50,000, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox.

At the moment Lincoln spoke, with the nation on the brink of such massive violence, his hopeful words about “angels” must have seemed like a futile gesture, and a pitiful one at that, a thimbleful of oil tossed onto a raging sea in the vain hope of calming it. Still, it was exactly the kind of moment—a moment of hopelessness that presaged many more

Democracy's Ecosystem

27

of the same—when only hope deeply rooted in a broken-open heart
can see us through:

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though
passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection.
The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and
patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad
land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as
surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

