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OPINION

What Trump Could Learn from Alexander Hamilton

BY JILL RICHARDSON

By now you've probably heard that Vice President-elect Mike Pence was booed by fellow theater-goers at a performance of the musical Hamilton, an unlikely hip-hop sensation that tells the story of Alexander Hamilton and other founding fathers.

Then, at the end of the show, the cast respectfully addressed Pence and asked him to protect the rights of all Americans — in all their diversity.

Donald Trump immediately demanded that the cast of Hamilton apologize to Pence. Twitter responded with the hashtag #NameAPenceMusical, offering up suggestions such as "Oklahomophobic!" and "Rent: But Not to Those People."

To be fair, the latter belongs less to Pence than to Trump and his father, who faced numerous accusations of racial bias in their real estate business.

Some Trump supporters used the incident to make a point of their own. Among them, one noted



that Hamilton was the creator of the Electoral College, the system that gave Trump the presidency even though he lost the popular vote by a significant margin.

If Trump supporters are interested in using this moment to discuss Hamilton's role in history, I think it's a fine idea.

Hamilton is one of the most influential interpreters of our Constitution, as well as one of its authors. And here's what we can learn from him.

First, Hamilton wanted a strong central government. He advocated taxation. He took these positions for practical reasons, not because he was a flaming liberal.

Hamilton was George Washington's "right hand man" (to quote the musical) during the Revolutionary War. He saw the problems our army had due to lack of funds and a weak central government and wanted to prevent such problems going forward.

Second, Hamilton was the original opponent of the "strict constructionist" view of the Con-

stitution.

Strict constructionism is what Trump claims to look for in a Supreme Court appointee. It's a doctrine that insists that we must only interpret the words of the Constitution literally, as they were written in the 18th century, and make no room for interpretation.

Hamilton, who was in the room

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where the document was written, thought otherwise.

Third, Hamilton saw the importance of establishing the U.S. banking system with strong credit. At our nation's founding, we were mired in debt and our credit was worthless. He saw the need to turn that around, and turn it around he did.

It's not going out on a limb to guess that Hamilton wouldn't like how modern-day Republicans play chicken with our nation's credit rating every time we need to raise the debt ceiling.

Fourth, for his time, Hamilton had relatively progressive views on race relations. He opposed slavery, and thought blacks were

his enemies to investigate him as much as they liked.

That's in contrast to Trump, who's positioning himself to make a fortune off his newfound power by keeping his business empire within the family while he serves as president (and who just had to settle a fraud case against his Trump University for \$25 million).

Sixth, Hamilton's name was sullied in his lifetime by false accusations of everything from wanting to turn the U.S. into a monarchy to enriching himself from his government job. I can't help but see a similarity to Hillary Clinton, who's been accused of every crime in the book.

Hamilton's story shows that widespread allegations don't equate to guilt. In the end, he was innocent of almost everything.

Instead of an apology, I hope the cast of Hamilton gives Pence something else — like an encore performance.

OtherWords columnist Jill Richardson is the author of Recipe for America: Why Our Food System Is Broken and What We Can Do to Fix It.

A Prayer to Stand Up for All Our Children

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Lord I can't preach like Martin Luther King, Jr. or turn a poetic phrase like Maya Angelou

but I care and am willing to serve and stand with others to move our children forward in this time of Thanksgiving.

I don't have Harriet Tubman's courage or Eleanor Roosevelt's political skills

but I care and am willing to serve and stand with others to save all our children no matter how hard the challenge.

I cannot sing like Marian Anderson or Fannie Lou Hamer

or organize like Ella Baker and Bayard Rustin

but I care and am willing to serve and stand up with others until all our children get health care.

I am not holy like Archbishop Tutu, forgiving like President Mandela

or disciplined like Mahatma Gandhi

but I care and am willing to serve and stand with others until child poverty is abolished.

I am not brilliant like Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois or Elizabeth Cady Stanton

or as eloquent as Sojourner Truth and Booker T. Washington

but I care and am willing to serve and stand with others until every child has an equal and quality education.

I don't have Mother Teresa's saintliness

or The Dalai Lama's or Dorothy Day's or Cesar Chavez's gentle tough spirit



but I care and am willing to serve and stand with others until no child is hungry

or homeless in rich America.

God it is not as easy as the 60's to frame an issue and forge a solution

but we will keep trying until we succeed because we care and are willing to serve and stand together with others to protect our children.

My mind and body are not so swift as in youth and my energy comes in spurts

but I care and am willing to serve and stand with others and organize and do whatever is necessary to protect our children from gun violence.

Some will think I'm so young nobody will listen

I feel invisible and hopeless and I'm not sure what to say or do

but you can say I care and am willing to serve and work with others to break up the Cradle to Prison Pipeline.

Some say we can't see or hear well, don't speak good English, stutter sometimes

and get real scared, standing up before others

but let's take a stand and do whatever we can to organize with others to save all our children.

God, in this time of Thanksgiving

use me as you will to save your children today and tomorrow and to keep building

a nation and world fit for children and where no child is left behind and every child is welcome and valued.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

Providing Insurance and Financial Services
Home Office, Bloomington, Illinois 61710

Ernest J. Hill, Jr. Agent

4946 N. Vancouver Avenue,
Portland, OR 97217

503 286 1103 Fax 503 286 1146

ernie.hill.h5mb@statefarm.com

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The Law Offices of
Patrick John Sweeney, P.C.

Patrick John Sweeney

Attorney at Law

1549 SE Ladd, Portland, Oregon

Portland: (503) 244-2080

Hillsboro: (503) 244-2081

Facsimile: (503) 244-2084

Email: Sweeney@PDXLawyer.com