

Independence Day: A Time to Celebrate Equality

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The settling of America began with the conviction that people of different back-

grounds and beliefs could live together and govern themselves for the common good. These ideals were so significant that the Declaration of Independence was created more than 200 years ago to ensure Americans their individual rights and freedoms.

Each year on the 4th of July, Independence Day, people throughout the country celebrate the signing of the Declaration by prominently displaying American flags in their yards. The holiday gives us the opportunity to reflect on the beautiful mosaic we have become as a result of our hard work to maintain our liberty.

Though Independence Day is an important holiday for American citizens, the celebration is also a ray of hope for those who lack basic freedoms in their own country. Immigrants from all around the world dream to have the same opportunities that Americans have.

One of the most important principles of the Declaration is the idea that that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These words have become some of the most powerful and consequential in American history; they have often been used to promote the rights of marginalized groups and have come to represent a moral standard for which the United States should strive. Ironically, though, the very freedoms that beckoned immigrants to our shores, as ascribed to on the Statue of Liberty, do not seem to resonate to today as we speak of putting up walls and fences and enact laws that encourage racial profiling in our border states.

America's founding fathers did not set out to promote guidelines that marginalized our new arrivals when they

drafted the Declaration of Independence. And, in 1776, when the Declaration was signed, Congress understood that immigrants were the building block of our nation and thus needed protection. They even listed the prevention of immigration as one of the oppressions by the King of Great Britain: "He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands."

We must not forget the many influential immigrants who have left a positive impression on our country: Nobel Prize Winner Albert Einstein; Composers Antonius Dvorak, Gustav Mahler, and George Gershwin; Pioneering entertainer Walter Elias Disney; Actors Bob Hope, Charles Chaplin, Elizabeth Taylor, Michael J. Fox, and Sydney Poitier; Google Co-Founder Sergey Brin and Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. They sought freedom, fortune, adventure, knowledge and culture in our great land.

By definition, an American is one who lives by the principles of the Declaration of Independence. When we act or speak contrary to these principles, we are denigrating the mosaic we have all come to cherish. So, this 4th of July, let us remember what it means to be an American: to never exclude others on account of race, nationality, or economic status.

For more information on immigration issues, please contact Grzecca Law Group at (414) 342-3000 or visit our website at www.grzecalaw.com.

Happy Fourth of July!



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