

What's So Important About July 5th?



Did you know that before the Civil War July 5th represented a response to what some considered the hypocrisy of July 4th? It was a day to call out the country for falling short of its claim of equality and liberty for all. Abolitionists at the time considered July 5th a day to recommit to the work of the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence. These patriots were dedicated to working toward the more perfect union that this revered document had promised. Loving our country means acknowledging its flaws, not accepting them. Loving our country means working to fulfill its promise.

This July 5th my husband and I celebrate our 51st wedding anniversary. I've lived through terrible attacks on our democracy, both domestic and foreign. In the 1960's we were a polarized nation. Many Americans, particularly our young people, were protesting strongly against the Vietnam War. I was sixteen years old when our democracy was shaken to its core by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and then the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Following soon after was the assassination of Robert Kennedy as he campaigned for President. Rising from all of that chaos and violence came the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1965 under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

In 2001 the horror of 9/11 brought out a collective national pride. Our American flag was flown everywhere as a symbol of our dedication to an American democracy that would survive despite the violence that was visited upon us that day. The new Freedom Tower stands as evidence of our strong commitment to this democratic nation.

The latest decisions by the Supreme Court seem in some ways to be another assault, undoing long fought for accomplishments in Civil Rights, Voting Rights, Women's Rights and Environmental Justice. The majority in our country does not support these decisions, yet we are being asked to live with them.

Today is July 5th and we can and should call out the Supreme Court and all those lawmakers who are not responding to the will of the people, but rather to their own personally held beliefs. We cannot let our disappointment and feeling of hopelessness overcome our responsibility to and for each other. Reclaim your patriotism by assuming that responsibility in whatever way you can. Pay attention to those lawmakers who support the issues you care about, the values you hold dear and the integrity of your vote. Election Day in America is the day we express the independence we fought for at our founding. Never underestimate the power of your voice and your vote!

Don't sit back – Step up!