

SERMON: Independence Day: With Hope for Liberty and Justice for All

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Alberita Johnson

Greetings...in two days we Celebrate Independence day, honoring Liberty and Justice for All.

This particular holiday has conjured a myriad of thoughts, and feelings for me for most of my adult life. Most of them in the form of questions, such as...

Liberty and Justice, can they exist separately? Should we separate them?

As a nation currently divided against itself, I say yes they can exist separately, but should not. **They are the pillars supporting the weight of our nation. Without them this experiment called America will falter if not completely fail.**

Two days from now our nation will celebrate the 247th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the birth of our nation. A holiday that commemorates Freedom. More commonly known as the 4th of July.

Thirteen days ago our nation celebrated the 158th anniversary of Freedom Day, Jubilee on June 19, to commemorate the end of slavery. More commonly known as Juneteenth.

For the people of this nation we now have two Federal Holidays commemorating Freedom one for a fledgling nation that began in

1607 with the arrival of the first colonist. And another commemorating Freedom of AA Slaves that began in 1619 with the arrival of the first African slaves.

Not many nations have two separate holidays celebrating Freedom, a fact I am proud of. Freedom is a precious gift, that none should go without.

Our founders imagined just that, a nation that inspired a new way of being a nation that was Free.

They imagined a nation based on Freedom, and Justice. This experiment called America is still a marvel, a beacon of hope to the world and continues to draw thousands to our shores everyday. Opportunity abounds, and there is Liberty and Justice to celebrate!

Makes me wonder...

1-How did we get here?

2-and are we a nation of Liberty and Justice?

How we got here...

The first colonist arrived in

- In 1607, many came for the same reason immigrants continue to come to America today. European settlers driven by a variety of motivations to take the journey across the sea, that ranged from religious to economic. Including a better life, religious freedom, and the potential for wealth.
- By the late 18th Century America- ripe for independence held firm to the belief they carried as Englishman the

government should not tax a populace unless that populace is represented in some manner in the government. (no taxation w/o representation)

- Which led to the Boston Tea Party revolt on Dec. 16, 1763.
- The British government considered the protest an act of treason and responded harshly.^[2]
- The episode escalated into the [American Revolution](#), in 1765, and 10 years later another war, the American Revolutionary War, the colonies secured their independence from the British Crown and established the US as the first nation-state.
- That date was July 4, 1776, happy birthday America and we as a nation embraced the Declaration of Independence.
- 169 years after the first colonist arrived.

Imagine with me reading or hearing these words for the first time as a colonist...“We hold these truths to be self-evident, 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”

for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which in my humble opinion...

not life, liberty nor the pursuit of happiness is possible without Justice.

So what about Juneteenth aka Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberty Day. That other holiday celebrating freedom.

· *On June 21, 2021 President Joe Biden signed a bill establishing Juneteenth a Federal Holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States as result of*

- *The American Civil War 1861 and 1865 between the Northern states (the Union) and the Southern states (the Confederacy) over issues such as slavery, states' rights, and federal authority*

· We celebrate Juneteenth on the anniversary of [General Order No. 3](#), issued by [Major General Gordon Granger](#) on June 19, 1865, the day when over a quarter of a million enslaved Black people learned of their Freedom, their liberation in [Texas](#).

· Two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation, by President Lincoln on Jan. 1 1863. Imagine with me hearing of your freedom two and a half years after you are free. Imagine the atrocities and savagery inflicted upon the AA slaves that may have been avoided if the slave owners obeyed the order. Resistance is also a form of oppression, when used that way.

That was a long time ago, and yet the legacy of oppression continues to linger, but any day celebrating Liberty and Justice should not be ignored, battles were fought, lives were lost for our Liberty for our Justice we must not forget nor ignore. Or we are doomed to repeat it.

And just as we AA's of slave descent celebrate Independence Day, the 4th of July we invite and welcome you to celebrate Freedom Day, Juneteenth.

2 years ago Juneteenth was established as a Federal Holiday. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of the Holiday, or are ambivalent.

I fall under the latter; I grew up in NY and had never heard of Juneteenth... but over 20 years ago when I moved to Florida I learned about the holiday.

I was pleased with the history of the holiday but displeased that I did not learn of it in school. After all slavery, the American Civil War is a significant part of our History.

And yet for half of my life I was unaware of a point in American history that is so significant in my country, that it is now a Federal Holiday. Additionally, this specific holiday is directly related to me, my ancestry, as a AA.

And reminds me that although the Declaration of Independence states all men are created equal. That it did not mean all men, it meant white men. As a result we have two holidays celebrating Freedom.

The 4th of July Independence Day, and our nation will celebrate it with much pomp and circumstances 2 days from now.

Unfortunately many of us are patriots but are not feeling patriotic or expressing our patriotism. We understand not only intuitively that something is terribly flawed within our republic. And we are reminded of it 24 hours a day on the news. Even the Flag we pledge to has somehow been hijacked, where is the liberty, where is the justice is it for all of us?

I don't know about you but I benefit from imagining a better world. But I am one person. You are one person but together we are mighty.

So how can we mighty united people make it happen... where do we start...we know we must not only face the problems of our ghost our past we must overcome them.

Can we do it, what symbols, words, and actions do we have; can we take; that will remind us of our dreams, our fathers dreams, our ancestors dreams. Our own dreams.

The fathers of our nations dreamed of a nation of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”

They recognized that Life without Liberty was no life at all.

But can we have genuine Liberty, is there any Freedom without Justice?

Well we know what we have been liberated from, taxation without representation and following that the abolition of slavery.

But what about justice, is it possible to pursue or achieve happiness without Justice?

Today I think we can find some answer to those questions with the help of two mythical figures namely, Ladies Liberty and Justice.

These two iconic figures are two of the most powerful symbols of the nation we call home.

Liberty, Justice.

We have been reciting the premise for years...with liberty and justice for all..., it is part of our pledge to flag and country.

These magnificent ladies are like guideposts to our pledge and patriotism while reminding us of the greatness of our country. Something we are all proud of.

Allow me to introduce to you Lady Liberty and Lady Justice.

Show Slides # 1 [Ladies Liberty and Justice - Google Slides](#)

Our Lady of Liberty was dedicated on October 28, 1886. She is the figure of the Roman Goddess Libertas, Latin for liberty or freedom, she is also known as the Liberty Goddess. She holds a torch above her head with her right hand, and in her left hand carries a *tabula ansata* inscribed JULY IV MDCCLXXVI (July 4, 1776 in [Roman numerals](#)), the date of the [U.S. Declaration of Independence](#).

A broken shackle and chain lie at her feet, that commemorates the national abolition of slavery.⁸¹ in 1863.

Her archetypes are Freedom and Independence.

NEXT SLIDE #2

Lady Justice can be traced back to 2375 BCE, in ancient Egypt as the Goddess Maat; who personified the [ancient Egyptian](#) concepts of [truth](#), balance, order, [harmony](#), [law](#), [morality](#), and [justice](#).

The original archetype of Justice.

Lady Justice as we know her today is the personification of Justice in ancient Roman art namely Ju-stitia. **(The Goddess of Justice)** she holds the scales of justice suspended from one of her hands to represent the weighing of evidence.

Notice, the scales lack a foundation to signify that evidence should stand on its own.

In the 16th century she was depicted with a blindfold representing impartiality.

She holds a sword in her other hand, it represented authority in ancient times (remember King Arthur and the knights at the round table), well the sword conveys two ideas, authority, and... that justice can be swift and final. As it was in those days.

She is often depicted with a book and snake under her feet. There is strong symbolism at the feet of both figures especially for AA.

Let's take a closer look at them

First Slide please Show Slides [Ladies Liberty and Justice - Google Slides](#)

Here you see at the feet of Lady Liberty-a broken shackle and chains.

It was a time that many AA ignored Lady Liberty but because of history that has **not** been erased we to rise and gaze with awe and great respect for Lady Liberty because we know that

- We AA of Slave descent have always been welcomed by her even before she arrived
- We understand that her feet commemorate forward motion breaking shackles and chains that represents slavery and oppression
- They lie at her feet as she is moving forward in liberty/freedom from bondage of any type

- Bondage and Slavery is behind her

We also know Originally the broken chains were in her hand, where the scroll with the date July 4, 1776 is inscribed. But this nation was not ready to face her own truth, that Liberty and Justice was not for the AA slave. So they tried to dumb it down, make less of it or shall I say rewrite history.

Unfortunately, this is true today. As our nation continues to struggle to learn that No one is free until we are all Free, as Dr. MLK Jr. reminded us.

Slide #2

Lady Justice is world-renowned. Her statues and drawings are in almost every courtroom around the world and she, as the personification of justice, became the ultimate symbol of impartiality and fairness that applies to everyone.

In fact,

- she is blindly impartial, as depicted by the blindfold she is wearing and the scales she carries.
- She has one foot resting on the book of rules, regulations and laws,
- and crushes the head of the snake that represents lies, and lawlessness.

She, unlike lady liberty is not in motion instead she is still, planted, a force to be reckoned with. A force so powerful that many seek to manipulate and control, but truth is hard to hide or deny.

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Here are some truths, happening right now that in my opinion do not exemplify Liberty or Justice...right here in Florida where we live,

Right now thousands including myself have suddenly become illegal,

my history

my relationship

my being lesbian

being woman

***In March of this year Florida legislatures began to seriously consider a bill that somehow tries to regulate a young girl's monthly menstrual cycle to 12 years old and above we know this because the bill said it (Menstrual cycle) is forbidden to discuss in school, if under 12 years of age, God forbid it happens for the first time in school...

Yes...our autonomy, women and girls' bodies have become such a severe threat to some folks that our Governor and legislators reached all the way down to elementary school to control it.

and of course, black and brown bodies, people of color are the scapegoat for just about any crime or irregularity in this entire country that includes me, my race.

Now I ask you my friends, is that liberty is that justice?

This is not just my story or Florida's...there are many more...

Erasing history or ignoring it is not the answer we have come too far; we cannot afford to forget, we have been here before:

- Stonewall that sparked Gay Pride-Happy Pride family
- Women's Suffrage so we can vote
- Women's Autonomy over their own bodies-so we can choose

and slavery we will not be erased,

book banning must stop,

and the threat of closing libraries will not be tolerated.

Many of us right now are suffering under unjustified and unholy fears that a small minority in this country have of others.

- My friends, we as a nation cannot afford to be ignorant as history is being erased
- our civil liberties being rolled back
- We cannot sit back as folks attempt to take over the Capital and overthrow the Government.

We must no longer let ignorance fuel the unholy fears of "others",

- other history
- other cultures
- other races
- other ethnicities, so much so that some want to discount **others** votes and even their right to do so.

All the while the real danger is the slow stripping away of the rights **Liberty and Justice for us All.**

We know this as we are currently in a country whose laws are spiraling out of control attempting to destroy what took centuries to accomplish.

Somehow, we have replaced the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and so forth with laws and rules of conduct that spark fear and cause oppression.

The late Dr. Wayne Dyer summarized it like this when reflecting on the Dao De Jing, Quote:

“When one see’s laws or rules as solely responsible for the effective virtues of kindness, justice and love and chooses not to live by them instead try to enforce them, then chaos ensues, loyalists appear, and patriotism is born.” End Quote

My friends, we have a choice here: we can choose to live from our hearts, viewing these virtues as individual responsibilities. For me this means demonstrating in all affairs kindness, justice, and compassion.

This **is, love in action I allow love to lead the way...**

You see it is not race, strength, power, or money that guides our being. It is love and trust.

We are subject to laws governing our society because without them it appears chaos ensues, as Wayne Dyer expressed.

But, I propose to you today that chaos arises not because we have no laws but because of the absence of virtues such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and the like.

There are no laws against these virtues, and many like them. I have heard on more than one occasion that these virtues are not written simply in a book, or on an ancient scroll. But are written in and on our hearts, we need only to heed them.

Then that old dragon, instigator of fear, that old serpent can keep on keeping on just as we keep on keeping on.

My Friends the snake itself has never been the enemy, only a reminder of the chaos that ensues when we fall away from the light and love of truth, liberty, and justice for all.

In closing, today as we continue forward motion into the 21st century, let us recognize that without the pillars of Liberty and Justice, we have no opportunity for a Life of Liberty or the pursuit of Happiness without Justice.

Let us remember these great ladies, these two Goddesses are still with us Liberty and Justice. Allow these two Pillars of our Nation to remind us to let ambivalence fall away and to examine ourselves in their presence, by checking the fear of **others and to** move away from classism, racism, and oppression in any form. This requires honest self examination. The original Goddess of Justice, Maat of Egypt, had scales also but her scales were to weigh one's heart against a feather. Classism, racism and oppression are heavy weights to carry, we must turn from them and let them go.

For without Liberty and Justice there will be no peace.

I think we can do it. I think we can find the courage to love enough to hold open the golden door of Liberty and Justice for all. I hope you think so also.

May it be so...Amen and Ashe_____