

Independence

“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. . . .”

The inspiration of these words inscribed as the preamble to our Declaration of Independence 247 years ago is still to this day so mesmerizing. Have you read the declaration in its entirety? If you're so inspired, you can read it here:

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

When I read it again for the first time in probably 30 years, the most poignant takeaway for me personally was the courage behind each and every word. Every signature represented a man that was surely going to die at the hands of the British if the revolution behind this initial document failed. To stand up in the face of a potentially impending death sentence for the sake of principle, to me, is the essence of true leadership.

Leading up to the writing of this Declaration, the colonials were completely taken advantage of, the trials the families went through on a daily basis were some that none of us can really relate to in the present day. The suppression was intolerable and the decision to take action and fight the injustice was, to an overwhelming degree, something that simply had to occur. I wish that courage was obvious today in our representatives and governing officials. They are there, but as a whole it is difficult to find that needle in a large and very bureaucratic and self-involved haystack. Sadly, the idea of actually “representing” the people often seems lost to competitiveness and self-interests.

I recently came home from my son's travel baseball tournament in Omaha, Nebraska. It was a great time of sport, taking in some of the college world series games and enjoying my son and the fellow parents. As all but one team in a tournament must, ours lost their last game in the semi-finals. It was a hard-fought game, and our boys had the lead when the opposing team tied it up in what we hoped was going to be the last inning. The game went to extra innings and ultimately my son's team lost as the other team hit a heartbreaking (for us),

walk-off hit to win the game. The coach had a good chat with the 13-year-olds following the game after which, they came off the field to their parents . . . crying. Every single one of them except my son . . . nope, including mine. Clearly something was wrong with his perspective, and we had a long talk about that on the way home.

So, you ask, why am I bringing up my kid's baseball tournament in a message about the Declaration? My point is this – if we are raising children who are crying after losing a hard fought, well-executed, 13-year-old baseball game, then the objective our country's revolutionaries initiated has been accomplished. We have achieved said "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." As a parent, I might worry about how our kids are going to grow up to be the leaders that we need them to be in times of true crisis – times of egregious suppression and unparalleled injustice. After all, it really is just a baseball game. Don't get me wrong, I love the sport, I love the parallels between sports and life. I love winning most of all. But we have to teach perspective. We all need perspective.

Bottom line – if we wake up on American soil – we have it really good. If you find yourself forgetting this, consider visiting the soil of some other countries and understand why most folks still seek to come to the greatest country in the world. The one thing we should always do is appreciate it, and this means a spirit of thankfulness for our freedom. Never take our freedom for granted and always remember those still serving to keep it every day.

Even those who don't serve in the military, government or any public sector can help keep us on track by raising and supporting our families to be courageous people - people not afraid to stand up for what is right and good and principled. Fortunately, we do not currently have to put our lives on the line in a way those before us did 247 years ago.

Happy Independence Day to you all.

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