

“This 4th of July is Different”

Dear Family/Colleagues/Friends:

Find a quiet spot somewhere amid the gaiety and joviality of the family gathering tomorrow. Call the children in from the games, turn down the tv sets and silence the range of electronic devices. Pause just a moment to acknowledge the historic inflection point at which our nation has arrived. Apart from the usual 'history' attendant with celebrating the 4th of July, this year's commemoration of our nation's Independence Day marks a truly significant data point along the scale of the American journey. This is a consequential milestone event as it marks the year in which it can finally be said that we have existed as an independent nation for the same number of years that formal slavery existed on this soil. African people were first brought here as slaves in 1619 and for the vast majority it was to be their legal, formal designation for the next 246 years, until the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in 1865. We know as we celebrate this July 4th that our nation was founded in the year 1776, which was exactly 246 years ago.

Of course, the struggle of African Americans for justice, equality, for full unfettered citizenship, indeed to be recognized as fully human, did not end with the adoption of the 13th amendment. Notwithstanding what we have accomplished for ourselves and for our nation over these past 157 years, we are reminded by events as current as today's newspaper headlines that our status is still not secure and that the price of freedom remains eternal vigilance. The political and judicial signs warning of an escalating assault on our civil liberties and civil rights are all around us. Half of the nation's states are under the political control of reactionary legislative forces apparently determined to surgically excise the Black experience from the historical record. The Supreme Court is presently dominated by an open cabal of justices whose avowed judicial philosophy is to locate and fix constitutional interpretation for our multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious, and multicultural 21st century nation in the minds of 18th century white men, a majority of whom held Africans as slaves. Still, while reality requires us to be somber and sober at this historical moment, it is our history, our gallant and noble history, that reminds us from whence we have come and how much we have overcome, that serves as a beacon and a guidepost for how we can successfully navigate the future. Happy Independence Day people. . . And The Struggle Continues!!

Marshall Rose

I know that what I am asking is impossible. But in our time, as in every time, the impossible is the least that one can demand—and one is, after all, emboldened by the spectacle of human history in general, and American Negro history in particular, for it testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible.

[James Baldwin](#), “Letter from a Region in My Mind” [The New Yorker](#), November 17, 1962