

"Let Freedom Ring" – July 4, 2014

Thank you Dr. Colegrove.

Please be seated

Ladies, Gentlemen, Patriots,

It is an honor to stand before you today at this celebration. When Dr. Colegrove asked me to speak at this event, I thought a long time about what I should say. I went back and forth with several ideas and always kept coming back to the topic and the title of this celebration - **Let Freedom Ring**. But what does that mean exactly, to let freedom ring? The simple answer is the sound made by the tolling of a bell. Webster defines this as:

a clangor, a ring, a reverberation, a noise. Those are the obvious definitions; which we will hear shortly. One use of "ring" that struck me was in the idioms – "Ring up the curtain", and "Ring down the curtain":

- **to begin or conclude a performance or an action.**

Let Freedom Ring!

On April 19, 1775, the "shot heard round the world" echoed far and wide from Concord Massachusetts throughout the Colonies and Europe, finally culminating some fourteen and ½ months later in a final - earth-changing resonance - with the adoption of the

Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. A conclusion and a new beginning, all at the same time.

Let Freedom Ring!

Our legal separation from Great Britain (our **D**eclaration of independence) actually occurred on July 2. It was on this date that the Second Continental Congress voted unanimously to approve a resolution of independence that had been proposed the prior month by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. His resolution declared that the Colonies were to be independent from Great Britain.

Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

Let Freedom Ring!

In fact, John Adams was convinced that July the 2nd would be the day that history would remember as the beginning of this new nation. In a letter he wrote to his wife Abigail:

“The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.”

Let Freedom Ring!

After voting for independence, Congress turned its attention to the document what we know as the Declaration of Independence. This document was a proclamation explaining this decision of independency. Thomas Jefferson was chosen as its principal author. Congress debated and revised, revised and debated; finally approving a version on July 4. It is, therefore, the 4th of July that was chosen as the day to celebrate. Not because the 2nd was less important, rather it was because that was the day the announcement was adopted and the vote passed. It probably also helped that the date of the proclamation was prominently displayed at the top – **In Congress July 4, 1776.**

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.

This has been called "one of the best-known sentences in the English language", containing what could be argued are "the most powerful and significant words in American history".

Let Freedom Ring!

The passage came to embody a moral standard to which the United States should strive. Abraham Lincoln is said to have considered the Declaration to be the foundation of his political philosophy, and argued that it is a statement of principles through which the United States Constitution should be interpreted.

Let Freedom Ring!

The Declaration of Independence did prove to be internationally influential. It was the first in a new genre of declarations that announced the creation of a new state.

French leaders were directly influenced by the text of the Declaration of Independence itself and thus adopted The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen - France (1789); the Province of Flanders (1790) was the first foreign derivation of the Declaration; other Declarations of Independence include Venezuela (1811), Liberia (1847), the Confederate States of America (1860–61), and Vietnam (1945). These declarations

echoed the United States Declaration of Independence in announcing the independence of a new state.

Some 23 other countries that used our Declaration of Independence as inspiration, or directly copied sections from it, included: Haiti (1804), New Granada (1811), Argentina (1816), Chile (1818), Costa Rica (1821), El Salvador (1821), Guatemala (1821), Honduras (1821), Mexico (1821), Nicaragua (1821), Peru (1821), Bolivia (1825), Uruguay (1825), Ecuador (1830), Colombia (1831), Paraguay (1842), Dominican Republic (1844), Republic of Texas (1836), California Republic (1836), Hungary (1849), New Zealand in (1835), Czechoslovak (1918), and Rhodesia (1965).

Let Freedom Ring!

The Declaration of Independence is a symbol of human rights. It has been used by the oppressed over the last 238 years as a symbol of their respective struggles. From slavery to women's suffrage, civil rights to same-sex relationships the words of Jefferson are often recited and paraphrased, but point back to the original meaning: “... **all men (mankind) are created equal...**”

Let Freedom Ring!

As today is Independence Day, the 238th Birthday of the greatest Country known to man I thought we should celebrate with a fitting birthday tribute. This is a familiar tune we used to sing in school, right after the daily Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From ev'ry mountainside,
Let Freedom Ring!

To paraphrase what Dr. Martin Luther King said to an intimate gathering almost 51 years ago...

Throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky... **Let freedom ring!**

From the Cumberland Gap to the Ohio River... **Let freedom ring!**

From Pikeville to Hickman ... from Covington to Franklin ...
Louisville to Lexington ... Owensboro to Williamsburg ... **Let
freedom ring!**

From every township, every burg, every hamlet, every hollar and every city –

Let Freedom Ring!

Thank you for having me today, and God Bless America!!