

The Fireworks were for me

By: Veronica Cool July 14, 2017



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In 1984, on a momentous day, my plane landed in New York City, and as we exited JFK Airport and jumped into a taxi, fireworks started lighting up the sky. I was already amazed by the skyscrapers, the busyness and the newness of one of the largest and most vibrant city in the world, but adding the fireworks was magical! From the perspective of an innocent child, I was welcomed, I was awed, I could not believe the United States of America welcomed everyone in such a way.

For me it was better than Christmas. Better than a day at the beach.

Better than getting the Barbie house. Imagine the wonder at such a welcome!

Only later did I discover, that the fireworks were in honor of the independence of the United States. The Fourth of July.

And as we celebrate this week, the 241st birthday of independence for the U.S., I believe we should celebrate what makes this country so fantastic:

Freedom of speech: We can speak our mind; we can gather, convene and discuss ideas and concepts to improve our country. That freedom, that privilege, doesn't exist everywhere. People get killed for uttering any dissonance against the norm. Let's be grateful that we can all speak our mind, we don't have to what is being said, but we do have the ability to do so.

Freedom of religion: Whether I choose to give praise to God, Allah, Jehovah, or no one at all, I have that choice. We don't get burned at the stake, we can believe in love and pray as we wish. That is an unknown option in many other lands.

The land of opportunity: If you are fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-generation Irish, English or German, you may not appreciate the simple fact that in America you may absolutely pull yourself up by your straps. In this land, an immigrant with \$50 in his pocket can become a Fortune 500 CEO. It's where a cotton-picker becomes an astronaut. If you choose or desire to be something, in America you can — not that it's an easy road, but with hard work, dedication, and support you can become the next big thing. You can leave a legacy for your children, stopping the cycle of poverty and oppression. That's America.

The diversity of our history: As you're reading this article, look around you. Look at your Facebook feed, look at your colleagues, look at your friends. Not one of you is the same. You hail from different backgrounds, different educational levels, different histories. That makes us great. The world would be boring and ineffective if we were all made from the same mold.

The promise of the future: We are comprised of some of the most diverse, innovative, creative thinkers of our time hailing from every corner of the world. We have such diverse backgrounds, including experiences and education — everything that contributes to diversity of thought. That's our future, fostering an environment where a young Mexican girl can design the next virtual reality platform, where a Syrian boy can discover the cure for cancer. That's our future.

This land is so remarkable.

Celebrate the Fourth of July with pride. Don't argue, don't focus on the negative and the ugly. We see plenty of that. Take this holiday to acknowledge how much we have accomplished. The very root of our foundation was established by those seeking to remake themselves, to re-create ourselves without the constraints of society, government and of the past. We get to carve our destiny.

I urge each one of you to take a moment to thank our military, for its contributions and sacrifices to allow the freedom of our democracy. And next take a moment to recognize the democratic freedoms we enjoy.

Happy independence, America. May fireworks continue to shine brightly

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