



# THE 4TH OF JULY DECLARATION

DENNIS PRAGER

Hi, I'm Dennis Prager. I want to introduce you to the 4th of July Declaration. A way to give meaning to the holiday.

Let's face it. For most people, the 4th of July is little more than a holiday from work. And that's fine, but it's not enough. Americans will not stay American on hot dogs and fireworks alone.

The 4th of July Declaration presents the best of all possible worlds. A barbecue with meaning. It fits right in to whatever you've got planned. It's easy to do, it's quick (no more than 10 minutes, though it can take as long as you like), and everyone, the kids, teenagers, adults can, and should, participate. It's not political, so your brother-in-law won't get upset. In fact, he'll enjoy it too.

America is much more than a place. It's an idea. We need to remind ourselves what that idea is, what it means, and why it matters. And for that we need ritual. Rituals remind us who we are, and they enable us to pass that identity from generation to generation. That's what our 4th of July Declaration does. Now join us.

Well hi everybody and welcome to our July 4th Declaration. Today we take a few minutes to remember what the 4th of July is about and to remind ourselves how fortunate we are to be Americans.

Before America was a nation, it was a dream -- a dream shared by many people, from many nations, over many generations.

It began with the Pilgrims in 1620 who fled Europe so that they could be free to practice their religion. It continued through the 17th century as more and more people came to the place that came to be known as the New World. In this new world, where you came from didn't matter; what mattered was where you were headed.

As more and more people settled, they started to see themselves as new people -- Americans.

They felt blessed: The land was spacious. The opportunities limitless.

By 1776, a century and a half after the first Pilgrims landed, this new liberty-loving people was ready to create a new nation.

And on July 4 of that year they did just that. They pronounced themselves to be free of the rule

of the English king. We know this statement as The Declaration of Independence. So, young folks, I'd like you to ask some questions and answer them and we'll begin with you.

YOUNG READERS:

Q: Why do we celebrate the 4th of July?

A: Because the 4th of July is the birthday of the American people -- the day we chose to become the United States of America, a free nation.

Q: Why was America different from all other countries?

A: Because in 1776, all countries were based on nationality, religion, ethnicity or geography. But America was created on the basis of a set of ideas. This is still true today.

Q: What are those ideas?

A: Three ideas summarize what America is all about. They are engraved on every American coin. They are "Liberty," "In God We Trust," and "E Pluribus Unum."

DENNIS PRAGER:

Alright everybody, pick up this American coin. Let's have some readers tell us what's on this, 'cause this is what America is all about.

READER #1:

"Liberty" means that we are free to pursue our dreams and to go as far in life as hard work and good luck will take us.

READER #2:

"In God We Trust" means that America was founded on the belief that our rights and liberties have been granted to us by the Creator. Therefore they cannot be taken away by people.

READER #3:

"E Pluribus Unum" is a Latin phrase meaning "From Many, One." Unlike other countries, America is composed of people of every religious, racial, ethnic, cultural and national origin -- and regards every one of them as equally American. Therefore, "out of many (people we become) one" -- Americans.

DENNIS PRAGER:

We have on our table items that symbolize the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War that won our freedom.

We drink iced tea to remember the Boston tea party. “No taxation without representation” was the patriots’ claim as they dumped British tea into the Boston Harbor.

We eat a salty pretzel to remember the tears shed by the families who lost loved ones in the struggle for freedom in the Revolutionary War and all the wars of freedom that followed.

We ring a bell to recall the ringing of the Liberty Bell which was rung to announce the surrender of the King’s army. On the Bell are inscribed these words from the Book of Leviticus: “Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof.”

We eat strawberries and blueberries dipped in whipped cream to celebrate the red, white and blue of our flag, symbol of the United States of America.

We celebrate America’s greatness without denying its flaws. There are no perfect individuals, so there can certainly be no perfect country. Our national history has its share of shame. The greatest of these is the shame of slavery which existed at our founding, as it existed throughout the world at that time.

But let it never be forgotten that we fought a terrible civil war in which hundreds of thousands of Americans died. And the reason for that war was slavery.

Let it also not be forgotten that America has fought in more wars for the freedom of other peoples than any nation in history. America’s history is one that we can be proud of.

Now we close with one more ritual. Let each of us sign our names to the Declaration of Independence. While it is a replica of the one our founders signed, the words and the sentiments are eternal.

And now while everybody is signing, please sing with me “God Bless America”.

(singing)

God Bless America  
Land that I love  
Stand beside her  
And guide her  
Through the night with the light from above  
From the mountains to the prairies  
To the oceans, white with foam  
God bless America my home sweet home  
God bless America my home sweet home.

Happy birthday America. Happy 4th of July. Let’s go and eat.