

Is America Treating July 4th with Contempt?

When it comes to holidays, I have to confess that Independence Day is one of my favorites. This favoritism is driven by a number of things, some of which include the fond memories, the warm summer days, and the American music which blares from the radio on the holiday.

But while July 4th is always a highlight, I must also admit that I'm increasingly guilty of overlooking the significance of the day, hardly giving a thought as to why we recognize it.

I was reminded of this problem when I came across [a letter](#) written from Benjamin Rush to John Adams in 1811. Both men were signers of the Declaration of Independence, and as such, had firsthand knowledge of the mood and nature of the event. It was for that reason that the remembrance of the day was especially important to them. Rush wrote:

"Dear old friend

The 4th of July has been celebrated in Philada: in the manner I expected. The military men, and particularly one of them, ran away with all the glory of the day. Scarcely a word was said of the solicitude and labors, and fears, and sorrows and sleepless nights of the men who projected, proposed, defended, and Subscribed the declaration of independance. Do you recollect your memorable speech upon the Day on which the Vote was taken? Do you recollect the pensive and awful silence which pervaded the house when we were called up, one after another, to the table of the President of Congress, to subscribe what was believed by many at that time to be our own death warrants? The Silence & the gloom of the morning were interrupted I well recollect only for a moment by Col: Harrison of Virginia who said to Mr Gerry at the table, 'I

shall have a great advantage over you Mr: Gerry when we are all hung for what we are now doing. From the size and weight of my body I shall die in a few minutes, but from the lightness of your body you will dance in the air an hour or two before you are dead.’ This Speech procured a transient smile, but it was soon succeeded by the Solemnity with which the whole business was conducted.”

Dr. Rush goes on to detail how many of the original Founders were held in contempt and disregard not even 40 years after the great event by various individuals in American society. But as Rush explains to Adams, such contempt was no longer discouraging to him, for he knew that he and his fellows had done their best to faithfully fulfill the tasks which they had been given on earth, one of which was establishing a new nation.

Unfortunately, the contempt the Founders experienced in their own lifetimes continues today. It’s not always purposeful – for indeed, many do have high regard for the exploits which the Founders accomplished on July 4th and beyond – but it happens regardless, largely because many of us are far too preoccupied with the present troubles we are facing individually or as a nation.

This 4th of July, perhaps it’s time to put those troubles behind us – just for a moment – and take time to remember the great sacrifice that was offered by the men and women who established a nation in which we could pursue Life, Liberty, and Happiness.

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