

July 4! An American holiday celebrated on its real date. We remember July 4, 1776, the day the second continental Congress unanimously issued the Declaration of Independence. It states:

“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 ...”

These words are familiar, yet still stirring. It is worth considering how they state belief in truths that are self-evident. These include the existence of a God who has created all human beings equal and endowed with unalienable rights. The rest of the document lists the many perceived transgressions of these truths, perpetrated by the reigning monarch. But this one excerpt from the text provides an ongoing agenda.



Some 165 years later, in his 1941 State of the Union address, Franklin D. Roosevelt, addressed the nation, upholding the now famous four freedoms: freedom of speech and of religion; freedom from want and from fear. Now, not just the emerging United States was at risk; this protection of freedoms was for the world.

A few years later (Oct. 24, 1945) the United Nations formally came into being. This was followed in 1948, by the formal proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document significantly influenced by Eleanor Roosevelt. It lists 30 rights belonging to all people, throughout the world.

Self-evident truths, unalienable and universal human rights. These are part of the dream pursued by humans in every era. Centuries before all of the above, Jesus addressed the same human thirst for truth and freedom. To his disciples, he promises:

“If you remain in my word ... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

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