

STILL DREAMING OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

After the wholly repugnant speech Donald Trump gave in South Dakota – on lands stolen from Lakota and Dakota nations because there was gold alleged to be in the Black Hills – it's important to remember this one point.

Donald J. Trump is not this country. He may be a product of it, but he is not this nation. He may believe *L'état, c'est moi*, but this premise is not this country's past and will not be its future.

We are the United States of America, including the many citizens he denigrated in his white-nationalist-written speech.

Trump may speak for and to a minority of people who voted for him in 2016, those whose rights were given preference by an electoral system designed to ensure white slave owners would not lose their grip on power to the Black people they once enslaved.

But Trump is not this country, nor are his base alone. We the people are collectively the United States of America.

This country's origins, though flawed by slavery and oppression of indigenous people, began with the right intentions. The founders sought to overthrow autocratic monarchic government and its oppression for the right of individual self-determination, fairness, and collective effort toward a more perfect union. It is this spirit we should recall and re-embrace each Fourth of July, disregarding the crackpot fulminations of the fascist criminal who would rather see this nation divided. He seeks to defer history's looming punishment meted out to those who have abused the trust of this nation for their own personal gain under Trump's administration.

History doesn't wait, however, not even for a bloviating white man with access to monied and

powerful friends.

History doesn't wait for us, either. Like this nation's founders we have choices to make and action to take if we wish to ensure the future is kinder and our history more forgiving.

In an 1858 debate with his opponent, Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln spoke of the Declaration of Independence:

I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include all men, but they did not mean to declare all men equal in all respects. They did not mean to say all men were equal in color, size, intellect, moral development, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness in what they did consider all men created equal—equal in “certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This they said, and this they meant. They did not mean to assert the obvious untruth that all were then actually enjoying that equality, or yet that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the right, so that the enforcement of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit. They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society which should be familiar to all, constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even, though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people, of all colors, everywhere.

History looks to us to enforce the rights in the Declaration of Independence, waits for us to continue to labor toward a free society. We are called to value the life of *all* its people, to

further the pursuit of happiness across this nation.

I'll repeat my closing from last year's Fourth of July post:

We must recall our nation's identity began with a shared belief that we are all created equal, that we are endowed with certain unalienable Rights including Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Seeking to establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, we instituted a government to secure our inalienable rights and these common interests.

We can and will check this government of and by the people when it fails us just as we checked a monarch in 1776, just as we've checked executives and other elected office holders who have failed their oaths. We have continually refreshed our representatives and justices to the same end.

As we have for 243 years we still have work to do. Ted Kennedy spoke of the ongoing nature of this nation's mission when he said, "For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die."

Recommitting to the American dream, I leave off with hope that we can and will continue to pursue a more perfect union.

Wishing you and yours a safe and responsible pandemic-enhanced holiday – wash your hands, wear a mask, maintain appropriate social distance but celebrate together nevertheless.

Consider this an open thread.