

July 4 Is Special for a Man Who Overcame Discrimination

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By Allen West

DALLAS, Texas—Having served 22 years in the U.S. Army and rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel, it always fills me with great pride to celebrate our nation’s Independence Day.

The extraordinary tale of how 13 ragtag colonies stood up to the most powerful nation in the world at the time to form a free, constitutional republic is one of the greatest stories ever told.

Yet it seems many Americans are embarrassed to celebrate our history. In fact, there are some who are actively trying to rewrite and even erase it.

In recent days we have seen vandals deface monuments and topple statues, all in the name of so-called “social justice.”

While their main target has been memorials of Confederate figures, protesters have gone as far as removing *The Pioneer Mother*, a sculpture of a woman sitting with a Bible on her lap in Portland, Ore.

They have requested that a statue of American poet Walt Whitman be taken from the Rutgers University campus in Camden, N.J.

State and local officials all across the nation also are acquiescing to protesters and have either removed or are planning on removing dozens of statues and memorials.

In Boston the city’s art commission voted to bring down a statue of President Abraham Lincoln—the man who signed the Emancipation Proclamation setting African-American slaves free!

Sadly, we have become a nation of victims instead of citizens.

Believe me, as a black man I fully understand the impetus to correct the wrongs of the past.

I was born in 1961 in a “blacks only” hospital in Atlanta, Ga., and grew up in the city’s Old Fourth Ward—the neighborhood that produced Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and where the American civil-rights movement captured national attention.

I am intimately familiar with the black community’s struggle for equality—not of outcome, but of the opportunity to pursue the American Dream.

Our nation’s past is not all peachy, but over the years I have learned history is not there for us to like or dislike. History is there for us to learn from.

Independence Day is an opportunity for us to thoughtfully reflect on our history and remember what the heart of America is really about.

The United States of America is remarkable for many reasons, but the key detail that sets us apart from all other nations is that the cornerstone of our founding is the ideal that our rights are given to us by God and not by man.

“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,” wrote Thomas Jefferson in the preamble of our Declaration of Independence.

Later, after our hard-fought independence was won, James Madison codified and specified these rights in our Constitution, our rule of law.

The first 10 amendments to our Constitution are described as our Bill of Rights. They focus on the individual and our protections from what our Founding Fathers had experienced: the intrusive, invasive and onerous nature of tyrannical governance.

It’s because of this founding ideal of our rights being endowed by our Creator that I, a black man born and raised in the segregated South, was able to become a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who commanded a battalion in combat. After I retired from military service, I became a member of the United States House of Representatives, the second black Republican congressman in Florida’s history.

Has my life’s journey been without difficulties? No.

Have I faced opposition and at times discrimination because of the color of my skin? Of course!

Yet I have been able to persevere and attain remarkable success because the ideal that we are equal in the eyes of God is etched in our Constitution. Today, this ideal empowers my two daughters to pursue their own American Dreams.

America has come a long way since 1776 because men and women who believe in our founding ideals fought for them to become a reality in our nation. This election year it’s up to us to play our part in this story by voting for leaders who will protect our constitutional rights.

Unfortunately, millions of Americans—including up to 25 million Christians—historically do not participate in our national elections. We cannot afford to do that this year.

As somebody who is living proof of the American Dream, I encourage you to not sit out this election. This coming election is not about a person or personality—it’s about principles. It’s about the rule of law or mob rule.

For Christians, the consequences are especially dire. Either we keep our first liberty—freedom of religion, and the free exercise thereof—or we are relegated to the catacombs.

Let’s continue making America that great nation our Founding Fathers envisioned, where every citizen has what the Declaration of Independence calls the God-endowed rights to “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”