

# Fourth of July

This Fourth of July marks the commemoration of the 241st anniversary of Independence Day. On this day, the separation of the 13 colonies from the Great Britain is remembered. This eventually led to the formation of the United States of America.

To the common public, the beginning of United States begins with the discovery of a "new world" by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Christopher Columbus set off from Spain in 1492, his destination was Asia. However, the journey became longer than the crew anticipated. Columbus promised his crew to berth when land was spotted. On October 12, 1492, the ships ran aground on the northern part of Hispaniola. The indigenous people greeted the guests with gifts, not knowing that the land that belonged to their ancestors is now considered the colony of Spain. This was followed by the colonization of America by Europe. Over the span of 200 years, between 15th Century and the 17th Century, Great Britain, France, Spain, and others have modified the boundaries of the territories that currently make up the United States.

Great Britain tried to impose a new tax on those living in the colonies in the 1760's. The colonists objected to this. One of the more well-known protests was the Boston Tea Party in 1773. Chests of tea sent by the East India Company were thrown into the sea as a sign of protest. The British government reacted harshly to this and introduced the Coercive Acts 1774, with the intention of punishing the people of Massachusetts who protested in the Boston Tea Party. The people of the other British Colonies responded with more protests. In October 1774, twelve of the thirteen colonies came together to convene the first Continental Congress. They listed a list of grievances and



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petitioned King George III to address those grievances. However, their grievances were not entertained.

The heavy taxes and the refusal of King George III to heed the concerns of the colonists led to the American Revolutionary War (1775 - 1783) between the thirteen colonies and Great Britain. The Second Continental Congress was convened in 1776. It was in this meeting that the representatives of the thirteen colonies came together to sign a document declaring their legal separation from Great Britain. This was publicly declared on 4th July 1776 and became the designated date for the Independence Day of the United States.

The core spirit of the United States of America can be found in the Declaration of Independence. The founding fathers believed in a Creator, who created all men to have dignity and to be equal. Secondly, having dignity as a creation, God endowed each human being with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Thirdly, the government should be responsible for securing these rights, and the government derived its powers to perform their role of governing from the people being governed. Fourthly, if the Government is not securing the right of the people to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it is then the right of the people to change the government. In essence, the founding fathers believed that God the Creator wanted mankind to live a fulfilling life, and the government is the earthly authority to ensure that this takes place. If the government is not playing its role, then it is time for the people (the governed) to change the government.

The interpretation of the Declaration of Independence had been evolving. At the time of Declaration in 1977, slavery was still very much a part of life in some portions of the United States. President

Abraham Lincoln faced much resistance before the signing of the Emancipation of Proclamation, which only involved parts of the United States that were in the Union in 1863. It was only through the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 that slavery was abolished. In 2009, the first African-American president, Barack Obama Hussein Obama II was elected. This event is considered a milestone in the fuller implementation of the statement in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal.

Today, the United States is a melting pot of people of different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. Starting from the 16th century, migrants from the Northern and Western Europe came to America. This was followed by migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe in the 19th Century. In the 20th Century, more migrants from Asia and Latin America came to the United States. In fact, apart from the native Americans, everyone else is an immigrant. The United States is the land dreamt by many, in order to have a better life, the liberty to live, and the opportunity to pursue happiness. It is a place where they believe they can succeed and achieve their dreams if they work hard, and dare to take the leap. A place where the impossible will be possible.

The statement: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, and that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" is the reason why the United States has become a place immigrants can call home. If the government and the people remember the spirit of the founding fathers of the United States - Yes, the United States will be great. God bless America! Happy 4th of July! ■