



faith . discipline . patience

Tomorrow, we celebrate the 246th anniversary of the signing of the United States declaration of independence.

As an immigrant I ask you to indulge me sharing why I am so grateful for this country.

I started as a telemarketer in this profession (I am sorry, it was I who interrupted your dinner to ask if you wanted a safe investment that paid more than CDs). With an accent and a foreign name, to boot.

I am convinced, especially twenty years ago, in the old world I would have received a far less generous response and I likely would have been forced to move on to another profession.

When describing this country to my relatives 'back there' I make sure to point out the massive number of charitable organizations and their armies of volunteers.

How many of you volunteer your time? Quite a few, I bet. That, to me, is something this country does really well.

I grew up in northern Europe. Sure, they have voluntary work, too, but there, more than here, a common thought as far as societal problems are concerned is to expect 'them' to handle it.

I believe people in this country more readily look to themselves to make their community a better place.

I love that.

It reflects a sense of freedom to impact our surroundings.

And I love the American custom of greeting one another with phrases like 'how are you today' and 'have a nice day'. Little things that lift me up, one tiny step at a time. I grew up without this, it was considered intrusive. That made it harder to make connections.

When one cares for the welfare of this country I know it is easy to focus overly on the imperfections of our union and subsequently lose hope.

I am not suggesting you ignore the bad. Rather, let's continue to acknowledge and work together to reduce the bad.

Then we may allow ourselves to appreciate all the good things about our country.

You can write a post or article criticizing the powerful without worrying about someone knocking on your door in the middle of the night.

You hardly have to worry that a contract you entered will be set aside because someone powerful and connected took the inside track. Many places don't even attempt to feign the rule of law.

You can worship whichever way you wish, and wear all kinds of head garbs.

You can call 911 and rightly expect someone will show up to help.

Let's not take any of this for granted.

In case, while you read this, you can't shake that inner voice telling you that 'heavens, there are so many things that are wrong with this country', then maybe, in a comparing human nature way, it can be of some help to read that this immigrant can think of loads of things that could be much better in his country of origin.

It's easy to imagine how other places don't have the problems we have. Like homelessness or racism. Trust me, they do. Sometimes in spades.

All places have their blemishes.

After all, pain and suffering, and the pull of attachments and aversions, are part of the human experience.

As are joy and happiness.

I am so grateful for this country and how all of us, together, make up a most intricate and wonderful tapestry of humankind.



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Happy fourth!

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