

Stop Trump from stealing our 250th

Living Americans share this belief with our Founding Fathers: No kings!



The U.S. Capitol stands behind a replica of the planned Triumphal Arch on Sunday in Washington, D.C. The festivities in the capital are a far cry from the bicentennial of 50 years ago.

BY BRETT WAGNER
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Never in American history has there been an Independence Day when the people of this great nation are more deserving of celebration.

Neither has there been a time since we declared our independence 250 years ago when living Americans share more in common with our Founding Fathers. (NO KINGS!)

And yet, for many of us, our 250th anniversary doesn't feel any more special than Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day.

Most Americans plan to keep it simple, just like any other Fourth: Throw some burgers or hot dogs on the grill, blow up some fireworks, call it a day.

That's a pity. And a full 180 from how our nation embraced bicentennial celebrations 50 years ago. Back then, our country, 218 million strong, buzzed with genuine excitement.

Never mind Watergate was barely in the rear view, nor the fact that our nation had just lost our first war in Vietnam; never mind the recent memory of driving President Richard Nixon and Vice President Spiro Agnew from office for their crimes, their attorney general and White House chief of staff going to prison; never mind the high rates of inflation and unemployment, a looming government shutdown, a Middle East oil crisis inflating gas prices, sparking a recession, which would end 30 years of uninterrupted economic growth and prosperity -- we were in the mood to party. And party we did!

I remember it well, watching as a boy the "Bicentennial Minute" each night on prime-time television, beginning on our nation's birthday in 1974 and running through Dec. 31, 1976. My young heart stirred nightly with pride for my country.

Today, of course, could not feel more different.

This time around, setting the tone for our nation's festivities — and hoping to overshadow them all — is a narcissistic, narcoleptic wannabe dictator/serial grifter/pathological liar unmoved by what truly makes our country "Great" ("We hold these truths to be self-evident, " "Nothing to fear but fear itself"). He treats our 250th not as an opportunity to bring our nation together, but like a MAGA event. Our Dear Leader is more interested in throwing a party for himself on the White House Lawn, putting his face on a \$250 bill and trying to create a \$1,776,000,000 slush fund to reward his allies.

Ironically, there is one tradition President Donald Trump chose to revive from those Bicentennial Days of yore: fighting and losing an unnecessary and wholly unjustifiable war of foreign aggression. This time around, he's made us the pariah of the entire world, and our ill-planned, ill-timed, ill-conceived foreign adventurism sent gas prices through the roof and the planet spiraling toward global recession. Not a bad day's work for someone who seems more preoccupied with building ballrooms for himself than managing a war of choice he seems to have started on a whim.

So, believe me, I understand why so many of us feel reluctant to celebrate our 250th with the same patriotic fervor and abandon as we did our 200th.

But don't let that guy in the White House spoil this for you.

We, today's living Americans, deserve a star-spangled celebration more than ever. "We the People" have earned this.

It was we who stood in the breach, often serving as that last "guardrail" between liberty and tyranny, refusing to surrender our streets to the masked thugs who killed Alex Pretti and Renee Good.

From the millions of us who pour into the streets for each No Kings protest; to the pro bono lawyers who each day defend our tired, poor, huddled masses; to the judges who routinely rule against Project 2025's blueprint for dismantling our democracy; to the white shoe law firms and institutions of higher learning

who (unlike some of their peers) refuse to surrender to the Trump administration's attacks on the rule of law and higher learning; to the reporters, photographers and camera people who show up to work every day only to be lied to, insulted and berated by a president who attacks on our democracy; journalists are tasked with reporting, fairly and accurately; and last, but not least, to all the Liz Cheney's, Adam Kinzinger's, and Thomas Massie's, Republicans who've chosen country over party to great personal sacrifice:

You deserve this celebration.

You've earned it.

Among those things ripe for celebration is how well our Constitution is holding up. Not only from the year-plus, full frontal assault staged by our wannabe dictator, but from his sycophants on Capitol Hill, the Supreme Court and beyond.

Americans today are not unlike those who populated our country 250 years ago. We're divided: one-third supporting democracy, one-third supporting the king and one-third supporting neither side.

I speak now to those of us who love country over king:

Ten years after Hitler's crushing defeat, some surveys found that around one-quarter of Germans still supported the authoritarianism represented by the Nazis; they just thought Hitler had gone too far.

Let's face it: This right-wing extremism circulating through our body politic like a cancer is going to be with us for a while.

The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Or as Benjamin Franklin is said to have famously quipped, when asked by a passerby, the ink not yet dry on our Constitution, "What have we got — a Republic or a Monarchy?"

"A Republic, if you can keep it."

As we sing "Happy Birthday" to ourselves, let's lift our voices high on that last refrain, "and many more!" Knowing that now, more than ever, it depends on us.

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