

Appendix H Assignment and Illustration From a Listserv Discussion on the Fourth of July and Other National Days.

Assignment for Listserv Discussion

Date: Tue, 02 Jul 2002 18:52:17 -0400
From: Merry <merryfield.1@osu.edu>
Subject: What does a holiday celebrating your nation mean to you?
Sender: owner-world727@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu
To: world727@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu
Reply-to: world727@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu
X-Mailer: QUALCOMM Windows Eudora Version 5.1
Delivered-to: orb-.1@osu.edu

This targeted discussion runs through July 5th. It is optional.

Thursday is the Fourth of July, a national holiday for Americans who will celebrate with parades, fireworks, cook-outs with family and friends and reflections on what it means to be an American. Given the effects of 9/11, I would guess this will be a year when Americans also reflect on the role of the U.S. in the world, and the world in the U.S.

I would like to kick off a targeted discussion of the meaning of our holidays that celebrate something about our countries, our histories and heroes. Help us understand what your country's national holidays (as opposed to religious or other special days) mean to you.

Kicking it off.....

I really cherish the ten Fourth of Julys I have spent in other countries where it is just a normal day like any other. I remember July 4th, 1978 in Sierra Leone where a group of eight American Peace Corps volunteers tried to have a barbecue in the middle of a monsoon and the rain on the zinc pan roof almost drowned out our teary God Bless America. Or July 4th 1988 in Subic Bay in the Philippines where Jim and I got together with American and Filipino friends to let off illegal fireworks and talk about the America we loved and missed.

When I am overseas I am profoundly reminded on July 4th of how special my country is to me. And I learn again and again how really American I am!

Have a safe holiday,

Merry

Below is 50% of the listserv discussion on the 4th of July and other national holidays.

I have always had very ambivilant feelings about the show of patriotism through symbols during the 4th of July festivities. Like Merry, my time overseas has shown me how truly American I really am. However, I am somewhat uncomfortable with the huge emphasis on the flag as a symbol of America. It seems that style often replaces substance in the case of flag worship. The results can be both ironic and contradictory.

For example, people love America so much that they would choose to imprison someone who burns a flag, an expression of the free speech that is a hallmark of the American way. Similarly, people become enraged that the expression "under god", added to the Pledge of Allegiance in the 1950s, could be offensive to some Americans, forgetting that religious liberty is a cornerstone on which our country was founded and that the Pledge wasn't considered "anti-religious" before the expression was added.

I am immensely proud to be an American. I guess I just struggle with the idea of symbols and the intense emotional feelings they create. We have all seen the historical instances when people allowed symbols to overwhelm reason and the consequences have been disastrous. For this reason, I always have mixed feelings on the 4th of July.

Sam

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Hello to everyone,

One of the national holidays in Turkey is the National Sovereignty and Children's Day (April 23). On this date in 1920, during the War of Independence, the Turkish Grand National Assembly was established in Ankara by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and laid down the foundations of a new independent state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. The founder of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk, dedicated April 23 to the children of the country to emphasize that they are the future of the new nation. This is the world's first and to my best knowledge only holiday for children.

I always felt proud when thinking about how the modern Turkey was founded from nothing to a modernizing nation. However, this national holiday has special memories for me. As a child, I looked forward for April 23. Every year, my mom would take me to the school and we would watch the parade, which was in the school's yard, and watch the dances and listen to music. Some years, my father would take me to the city's stadium and we would watch the bigger show. But above all, I was always at home in the afternoons on every April 23 because there would be a TV show. From at least 20 different countries, children folklore groups would perform. I loved watching children dancing with their national dresses. At that age, I was fascinated.

Of course, now in America, we do not celebrate the holiday. This year I did not even realize it was April 23 (bad, isn't?). Take care,

Yasemin

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I feel very guilty because I have not taken the fourth very seriously the past 7-8 years. I remember in 1992 when I was working at Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, NM that I was in the middle of the mountains serving as a guide for a troop who had two ex-military advisors. They took the fourth very seriously and we all had a very somber moment around a campfire and I felt so lucky to live in this country. I felt that way again on September 11th-now. I definitely took and take much of what we have in this country and in my own life for granted. I have never been to other countries other than Canada and Mexico and have never been there on their independence day. I cannot imagine how some of the countries feel such an intense pride after winning their independence after so many years of oppression or simply being ruled by another.

David

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Hello Everyone!!

Actually, there is a national holiday in Japan, which is similar to the Fourth of July in America. That is Kenkoku Kinenbi (the National Foundation Day) in February 11. However, I think that many Japanese people do not consider this national holiday as something special but regard it as one of the holidays because of the reason why this national holiday was established. February 11 was set up as the National Foundation Day because according to Nihon Shoki (The Chronicles of Japan) this date in the solar calendar was the day when the Japan state was founded by Jimmu emperor, who is considered as the first emperor in Japan (660 B.C.). However, many historians believe that the Emperor Jimmu's enthronement in Nihon Shoki was not a historical fact but folklore. Thus, many Japanese people think of this day as just one of the national holidays because of the unconvincing reason to establish this national holiday.

Even though the National Foundation Day does not seem special to Japanese people, in my town we show love for the nation by hoisting the Japanese flags whenever the national holidays come. My town is separated into some districts and each district has small groups consisting of members (usually fathers in every family) from the districts. Each member takes turns going to community centers and hoisting the Japanese flags there on the national holidays every year. Although I am not sure that this is practiced all over Japan, this role helps me to realize importance of love for Japan.

Have a good holiday.

Keiko

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I must admit that the Fourth of July/Independence Day had never been a specifically patriotic holiday for me. Even as a child when my father worked at an Army Base in Massachusetts and we would all go to the base to watch fireworks, I do not recall any specific patriotic moments. In fact what we look forward to was Tchaikovsky's 1812 overture (the army base used real cannons and giant bells, and it was the last song before the fireworks). The holiday has always meant to me cook-outs, fireworks and good times with family and friends. Rarely if ever can I remember any patriotic feelings. I'm not real proud of this but even now post 9/11, I'm looking forward to seeing some good fireworks and being in good company. Patriotism is one of the last things on

my mind, I suppose that this is an example of what I should be so proud of, the freedom to enjoy my friends and the unity this holiday provides.

Mario

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One of my favorite Fourth of July holidays was when I was in graduate school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As a lot of people have noted, the Fourth is usually spent at cook-outs and picnics. At the time, I was waiting tables at a restaurant and wasn't too happy when the owner said we would be open for the holiday. We were the only people on the street that were open! The owner only had a partial staff working because he figured that most people would be having picnics.

Well, about two hours into my shift we were packed! About two hours later, we were out of food. I didn't think much at the time, but when we were cashing out, one of the other wait staff said, "I think that I waited on one native English speaker all evening!" And, as I thought back, I realized that the same had been for me!

We ended up going to a bar down the street and we ran into some of the people that we waited on. We talked to them for the rest of the evening. They joked with us about running out of food, and we told them that next year they must have a cook-out. I liked sharing my Fourth of July in this way! In a weird way, I felt like I knew these people for a long time. When we left, they thanked us for sharing our holiday with them.

Amy

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As I sit to write my feelings about the celebration of a U.S. holiday, the Fourth of July, I listen to the NPR report explaining why U.S. fighter planes attacked a civilian wedding in Afghanistan, killing numerous innocent men, women, and children. This moment is very symbolic of the conflict I have always felt when thinking about my own patriotism. I feel that I am constantly torn in two directions, one that loves (and feels an obligation to) my country, and the other that sees the truth, the contradictions, and the pain and suffering that our policies have inflicted on the rest of the world and within our own borders.

I was raised in a family of military men - my father was in the army for 30 years, and a vietnam vet - and I was taught that country is as important as family. Celebrations like the Fourth of July and symbols like the flag were as holy as a cross in the Catholic church. We were taught to treasure and feel privileged and lucky to be U.S. citizens.

After traveling to other parts of the world and learning from citizens of other nations about their perspectives on the United States (and learning more about the effect of U.S policies on people of other nations, the environment, people within the U.S.), it has become very difficult for me to treat symbols of my country with the same amount of respect and loyalty. At times, I feel disgusted by the ignorance of those who don't ask critical questions about U.S. policies. At other times, I wave the flag myself and feel torn about my love for the U.S. and my grief and anger for what this country has done in the world.

Marg

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During my childhood we always spent our fourth of July in a cabin on a lake in New Hampshire. Back home in MA the two weeks surrounding the 4th were the weeks that the local mills shut down for summer vacations. My dad was a machinist in the mills and with my maternal grandparents, the family would head to the mountains and lakes of NH for our vacation. As my dad moved into the field of education he still had the schedule that allowed us to continue this tradition. I have always had great memories of these times. Getting up early in the morning to fish or swim, the beautiful scenery and the resounding noise of the fireworks as they were set off over Lake Winnepesaukee. As I reflect upon these times the role of July 4th for me has been more one of family fun and togetherness than meditation upon the country's heritage.

Due to September 11, perspectives have changed somewhat for me and my family. There is a different understanding of what Independence Day symbolizes, even for my 14 and 16 year old daughters. We still have many bridge overpasses decorated with flags that have been well-maintained since 9/11 in our area. We've recognized that there are cherished freedoms in our country and we are been very fortunate thus far in our lives. This year July 4 will help us to remember and celebrate those freedoms. The day will still be a time for family, friends and fireworks over the lake (although now we've moved to Lake Pequawket in Maine). But, this year there is more of an understanding of how fortunate we are to have the opportunities we have. Enjoy the Holiday,

Jason

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Hello all, This will be my first experience to see the 4th July in America. I heard that there would be amazing fireworks downtown and all over the city. I want to see Americans celebrating this memorial holiday. In Korea, there are two national holidays to be compared with the 4th July in U.S. One is October 3 - our founding day. (according to our legend, we call it the day when sky opened 4335 years ago.) The other is August 15 our liberation day from Japanese colony(The day Japan surrendered in World War 2.) Although these holidays are really important days in our history, these are just like the other holidays.

The most important holidays in Korea are the New Year's day on lunar calendar and the Thanks giving day, October 15. on lunar calendar. I think the reason why these holidays have been celebrated is from Confucianism tradition especially focusing on family values. All extended family members gather together at the eldest son's home within their 5 generations family because he will preside ceremony of honoring ancestors. (Usually it will be at grandfather's eldest brother's home. Unless he is alive, it will be father's eldest brother's home. If he also is not alive, my eldest cousin's home even though other grandparents or uncles are alive.) We honor our 5 generations ancestors with a kind of religious service. During three days off holidays most of Koreans go to their hometowns to meet their family and honor their ancestors. As I had lived Seoul for 13 years, I went to Pusan to see my family every holiday. Although 5-hours drive distance from Seoul to Pusan takes more than 20 hours drive distance because of traffic jam, we go to our hometown with a lot of presents for parents, brother, cousins, nephews and other family members.

Through these national and ethnic holidays Koreans think of their ancestors and our nation.

This year I missed the New Year's day for the first time. Two months experience in America made me feel nostalgia for my family and country. What I could do was just calling to my cousin's home. I talked for a long time with all my family members. Seeing no celebrating my great holiday I found myself as a Korean. It is an irony, isn't it? Anyway I felt I am a Korean more than I felt before.

I don't think that living in a globalized society means living without national identity. What we need is to think other cultures with globalized perspectives. This night there will be great celebration of Americans. I will see how Americans celebrate this day. And I will also celebrate American holiday. This cross-cultural experience will make me understand America and Americans. I wish your everyday will be filled with good news.

Hunsuk

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Marj's comments resonate with me. Often times, when one raises concerns about U.S. policies or their ramifications, one is seen as unamerican by some who wave the flag most patriotically on the 4th of July. The message seems to be that any criticism of the country is tantamount to disloyalty or treason. Comments like "If you don't like the U.S., why don't you just move someplace else?" are common. It is this form of patriotism that makes it difficult for me to get overly involved in the public worship of symbols.

Barry

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I read Marj's comments on July 4th with great interest and would like to reply to them because I, too, am an American that loves my country but also one who is frequently critical of its foreign policy. Like Marj, I believe that Americans have a responsibility to look at their country's policies critically--not because we dislike our government or don't respect it, but because we want our government to be guided by the very best policies, to avoid repeating past mistakes, and to make our government the very best it can be, both in terms of its domestic and foreign policies.

The problem is, however, that many Americans take the "my country right or wrong" attitude, meaning they give unconditional support for US policies and see fellow Americans who criticize US policies as disloyal. This is a shame, because even though I do, on occasion, criticize US policy, I am every bit as much a patriot as those who support the US government unconditionally. And I refuse to allow others to label me as disloyal. But I also strongly believe that I have no right to criticize those Americans who unconditionally support our government. I don't share their kind of patriotism, but it would be as wrong for me to condemn their approach to loving their country as it is for them to brand me as unpatriotic. All of us should recognize that reasonable minds will differ and we should respect each other despite our differences. And just because "they" don't respect "us" does not give "us" the right to denigrate "them." Otherwise "we" run the risk of being just as narrow-minded and bigoted as "them."

By the way, this whole discussion of patriotism is very much on my mind because earlier today I had a long political debate with four immigrant Americans, two originally from the Soviet Union and two originally from Iran. Despite the fact that all of us were Republicans, my brand of

Republicanism was too moderate for the rest of them and I found myself being lectured to as if I were crazy and some kind of fool. I was ridiculed for supporting John McCain in the Republican primary and they considered me a Republican heretic for thinking that George W. Bush is not as well-read or knowledgeable about the world at large as would be desirable for someone holding the office of President of the United States. What struck me at the time of the discussion was how narrow-minded and intolerant we all are to be surprised, even upset, when others disagree with us. In an intellectual sense it's as if we are still children. It would be much better, I think, if we could follow J.S. Mill's advice and see dissent as a GOOD thing because it challenges us to reconsider the views we hold, and keeps us sharp intellectually. After all, if you don't question why you hold certain beliefs, you run the risk of forgetting why you adopted those beliefs in the first place. And all of us should be open-minded enough to allow that at least some of the beliefs we hold may be mistaken.

Well, this message is too long, but to conclude, I would like to cast my Independence Day vote for toleration of the views of others--even and especially those who don't return that toleration for our views. Wishing a Happy Fourth to All,

Baker

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The 4th of July is a very meaningful holiday to me. It is a time for reflection on what it means to be an American. It is a time to silently thank all of the people who have worked so hard to make America the country that it is. It is also a very sad time for me. As Marj said, I feel torn between patriotism for my country and disgust in the things it does. I know that I am not alone in feeling this way - my father, a Vietnam Vet - feels the same. I think that anyone who has experienced life outside of the US at some point probably wonders if America is all it claims to be ... and the 4th is the perfect time for reflection!

Kim

Baker, I'm going to take you up on the J.S. Mills advice. Aren't you offering a dangerously relativist argument? Are all forms of patriotism equally "right"? What if someone's view of patriotism is hating all people with accents or who have skin color different than their own? Would you still suggest that you have "no right to question" his beliefs? Does tolerance mean that every view is equally acceptable.

When you cast your Independence Day vote for toleration of the views of others--even and especially those who don't return that toleration for our views, does this mean that you are especially tolerant of Neo-Nazis? Is this really the way you want to celebrate July 4th? I understand that people can be "narrow-minded and intolerant" of people who disagree with them and that we all need to examine our beliefs carefully. Still, aren't there ultimately some beliefs that are better than others, or are all beliefs equally worthy of tolerance? Hope this bit of dissent is a good thing! :)

Ben

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In Jamaica (like many former colonies) there is much ambiguity about National Holidays. In general we have three major national holidays, Emancipation day (August 1), Independence day (August 6), and National Heroes day (3rd Monday in October). While I was growing up however Independence day was observed not on the 6th of August but on the first Monday in August. This was changed in 1998 to a fixed date (with much opposition I must add). Emancipation day is also a relatively new phenomenon was removed in the 1980's but reinstated in the 1990's.

There is a method to the madness of these variable dates. The idea was that if you put the holiday on a Monday then people would have a long weekend – of course that would mean 4 day parties and a happy populace. The bad thing however has been that there emerged a sense in which people thought of the day as a holiday not as a special day for reflection on the meaning of national independence.

The other major problem has been that the nation has long been split over emancipation day vs independence day – a lot like here in the USA. Emancipation day (Jamaica August 1, 1838, USA January 1 1863 OR June 1865 [if you live in the South]) for some people has been more special because it marked true freedom for Blacks in these countries. A part of the Jamaican population called for Emancipation day for a long time because that had a more special meaning. Some people (I am one of those) who still deeply question the notion of Jamaican Independence – In large part we still bear the trappings of British rule. In our constitution head of state means “the queen in Parliament” and is represented by a governor general; our highest court is still the British Privy council. Independence for many was considered a kind of “gift” their time was up so they left the empire. Emancipation on the other hand was something we fought and bled and died for. – a lot like the war of independence.

WITH ALL OF THAT SAID... of our national holidays my most cherished is Emancipation day. My most cherished memory of emancipation day was in about 1993 or 1994 it was before Emancipation day was officially re-instated. I had the honor/privilege of attending a cultural study circle with about 10 other people. It was put together by an African American woman who was born in the Garvey movement here in the US. We went to her home where we had food, read from Garvey's writings and shared narratives on each others lives. Overall Emancipation day for me carries more meaning.

Daral

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Independence Day Celebration in Ghana

Ghana before Independence was called The Gold Coast. this name was due to the fact that the whole of Ghana is believed to be a land of Gold. The road to independence could date back from the first time 'white people' landed on the soil of the Gold Coast, from 1472- the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes and the British. The British dominance lasted from the 19th century through part of the 20th century. After a 100 years rule which was established in 1844, some highly educated Ghanaians who felt the need to have freedom from colonial rule came together to fight for the freedom from British rule. These people were popularly known as 'The Big Six'. The struggle for independence went on for some years but finally the country was given the independence on 6th March 1957. The name Gold Coast was changed to Ghana, after one of the old empires of West Africa. Since that day the country celebrates the day for independence every year. If the day falls on a weekend,! it is celebrated but the following working day is given as a holiday. On an independence day holiday no shops open and the day is solemnized and is characterized by a national celebration.

A typical independence day is marked by a long parade organized at the 'Independence Square'. There is a march past of school children, teachers, organizations, the various security services (armed forces, police, prisons, customs, immigration, fire) amid national songs and firing of musketry. Diplomats and heads of states of other African countries are invited to grace the occasion. At this occasion distinguished states men and women are honored by the president. these include: outstanding teachers, students, schools, hospitals, farmers and senior citizens etc. This occurs at the national level while similar activities go on in the various regions in the country. In the

evening there is a state dinner organized for the senior citizens and veterans. There is fireworks to crown the celebration in the night.

Point of interest: Three outstanding teachers who were acknowledged last year are currently in Columbus Ohio, as part of their award to tour the US to learn about the education system.

Anku, CC

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Dear Ben,

Thanks for replying to my July 4th message and for "dissenting" from my views. You've forced me to take my own advice and rethink my own positions. It's a good thing, especially when you state your dissent in such a reasoned and interesting manner. Makes me feel lucky to be part of this online course and to have the opportunity to engage in such a spirited dialogue.

I think you are absolutely correct to believe that, while tolerance is generally a good thing, there should be limits to tolerance. I agree with you that not all views are equally acceptable and that it would be dangerously relativistic to be completely tolerant of everything.

But you are mistaken if you believe that I was implying earlier that "all forms of patriotism are equally right." In fact, I was referring to two very specific (and probably the most common) forms of American patriotism:

1. loving one's country and government unconditionally and uncritically
2. loving one's country and government while not blindly accepting all government policies and actions as correct, but rather criticizing those policies that appear wrong or misguided.

My point was that I think both types of patriotism are valid and that those who hold one of these views should try to respect those who hold the other. In the same way, I believe that those who voted for Al Gore last year should respect (rather than denigrate) those who vote for George Bush--and vice versa. This is what I mean by encouraging toleration.

What I did not mean (and I thank you for the chance to clarify) is that we should tolerate chauvinists--i.e., those who not only love America but hate other countries, religions, races, or ethnic groups, too. All patriots, I would argue, need to vigilantly protect their patriotism from developing into chauvinism.

You specifically mentioned Neo-Nazis. No, of course I don't advocate tolerating their views. Rather, I openly condemn the racist views Neo-Nazis hold. But at the same time, I don't see the Neo-Nazis as a serious threat to the American social fabric because they are (thankfully) such a small, fringe group. In my entire life I've never met any American who claimed to be a Neo-Nazi or who even espoused the views of that group. On the other hand, I see every day Americans both on the left and the right who are piously intolerant of the political views of others with whom they disagree. And I think this intolerance, which often leads to the demonization of the "others," is far and away the greater threat to American society. This is why I am advocating toleration.

Wishing you a happy Independence Day,

Baker
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Hi, Everyone:

I have been following this discussion very closely, and I was struck to read about the mix feelings about the 4th of July. For me, our national holidays are not tied to what it means to be a Venezuelan.

I think I was taught patriotism in a different way. For instance, July 5th is our Independence day, but although it is observed as a national holiday, it does not involve people in a huge celebration in the whole country. The big ceremony is conducted by the President in Caracas, the capital, and we watch it on TV if we want. People take the day off just to rest. Generally, all stores and restaurants are closed. It's boring in a way because we can't go out to eat or shop.

I think my patriotism values are more oriented towards the group as a whole (i.e., collectivism) such as homeland, community, friends, and family. Perhaps it is for this reason that holidays such as Christmas that bring the family together are of such a huge relevance for me. On December 31st, for example, we have fireworks all over the country starting at 15 minutes before the year ends to celebrate the new year coming and to say good-bye to the one that ends. I have enjoyed the 4th of July here over the past 4 years. Last night I watched the countdown on TV and I could not help to feel very sad because of what happened 9-11 it was a really touchy and sensitive ceremony.

Best regards,

Leila, CC

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Now, I'm rethinking my views of JULY 4 due to what I've been reading here on our list serve and what I've seen around me today, July 4th. I've been happy with my family time on this day and have personally found renewed patriotic interest due to the events of 9/11 (discussed in my earlier entry). As I've read Leila's words about Venezuela's Independence Day being a day of rest, and Anku's explanation of Ghana solemnizing their national celebration I get concerned with our American view of this holiday here in New England.

I drove through Massachusetts and New Hampshire this morning to get to our family retreat here in Maine. We left MA at 4:00 a.m. to avoid as much Boston traffic as possible and to get through the NH toll booths before the crush of cars which invariably happen around 9:00 a.m. Five hours later we arrived after seeing every fast food establishment, retail store and possible commercial establishment open for the glut of us consumers who are out to spend our excess money. As I sit here quietly by our lake I'm reflecting not upon the meaning of JULY 4 for my family and me, but of the people who are out working and spending during this day of national celebration..

I think I admire Leila's perspective of Venezuela's day of rest and Anku's national celebration in Ghana much better. Their presentations seem to show more respect for such important historical days than our celebration of JULY 4 has shown here in New England. It appears that more important than remembering the day is capitalizing on the commercial possibilities at the expense of the young workers and their lost opportunities for family and reflective time.

As I read other views of National holidays from various countries I wish I had experienced a day more like that which Hunsuk related about Korea. Although he would travel a longer time than I, he would arrive home to think of his ancestors and his nation. In America we need on special days like JULY 4 to put aside our commercial opportunities and allow all people to concentrate on what's really important, our families, our ancestors and our Nation.

Tracy

Greetings to All:

I too like most people who have responded thus far am ambivalent about national holidays. The July 4th celebrations have always been problematic for me for two reasons. First, July 4th is the day before I celebrate my birthday. As a child I can remember feeling short changed by everyone because they were too tired to celebrate my birthday with me.

Secondly and more importantly, I have a difficult time feeling patriotic and celebratory towards a nation that at its founding viewed my ancestors as less than human beings. We as African Americans were not even considered citizens of this great nation that professes freedom, liberty and justice for all. For me, this national holiday in particular serves as just another day to be with my family and one whereby I eagerly await it ends so the I can celebrate my day of arrival on earth.

Lucy

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I have enjoyed many holidays on July 4 with my my family and friends. I value the personal, family experience that some Americans enjoy on this day. I also know that this day means something different to all people. If we cannot remember and recognize that . . . we should switch to the college of 'unawareness' immediately.

I celebrate the United States of America because it is my country and much of what makes me me. As a citizen, global education major, community member, family member, and social studies teacher, I spend a great deal of my time arguing about, supporting, debating, hating, loving, disliking, admiring, and 'just being plain confused' about my nation. I hate some of the political, social, economic, and international policies we support, and I would give up anything to defend and support other ideas. I guess that is something to think about.

For me, July 4 is a time to spend with friends, kiss my wife and baby, and be thankful for the opportunity to ponder all of the issues we will undertake over the next three weeks. That process is something to celebrate

on July 4.

David

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I thought this represented some of the emails I have been reading from you all re: the 4th of July.
Teri

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In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Mercy-Giving
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Assalamu Alaikum and Happy Independence Day.

I pray for freedom and happiness for all peoples wherever we may live.

On July 4th I plan to get up early in the morning and submit myself to my Creator in prayer thanking Him for everything He has blessed us with while remembering those who do not have what I do in terms of freedom, life, food, or shelter.

I must admit I am a bit offbeat. I remember crying on the happy days of Eid thinking about those who do not have much to celebrate. I have many feelings on the eve of this Independence Day â€"happiness, thankfulness, gratefulness, and, a lot of sadness.

It amazes me that we who have plenty to eat, who take our freedom for granted can so easily forget those who scramble for their daily bread in Palestine, Kashmir, and Chechnya and who continue to struggle for freedom. Half of the Chechnya's population has been wiped out in the last 100 years but they have not given up on their dreams of freedom. I wonder why my feelings for these people is not shared by my caring and ethical neighbors? May be I am not a good neighbor? Can we truly be free without recognizing the rights of others to live in freedom? Why can't my fellow Americans hear the Patrick Henrys of today saying, "Give me liberty or give me death"?

I am blessed and I am thankful. But I am not happy. I am an American in pain. I am in fear too. Fear of some arrogant people taking down another building to terrorize innocent human beings; worried about my taxes being used to bomb innocent people; and fearful of my daughter being harassed because of her hijab. I am resentful also. Resentful of those Muslims who have harmed our great faith through a street theology of anger. And of politicians like U.S. Attorney-General Ashcroft who pledged to uphold my rights but ridicules my faith instead.

I have lot of feelings today. I will carefully note them down this Independence Day as I pray, think, and, interact with our fellow citizens and I will share them with you next week, insha Allah.

In the meantime, I resolve to be a better Muslim, a real neighbor, and a better citizen than I have been. This Independence Day I will declare my personal jihad for building bridges between people, of creating a third side in

America that includes all decent human beings of all faiths to take our civilization to a higher level.

This newsletter invites you to brush up on something we hold so dear to ourselves.

*** SOUND VISION'S PAGE ON FREEDOM

<http://SoundVision.com/info/freedom>

*** THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

<http://SoundVision.com/info/freedom/declaration.asp>

*** THE BILL OF RIGHTS

<http://SoundVision.com/info/freedom/bill1.asp>

*** JUSTICE IN ISLAM

There is one word that captures the essence of all Islamic laws and all Islamic teachings; one word that describes the overriding value that permeates all Islamic values. Justice.

<http://SoundVision.com/info/peace/justice.asp>

*** WE NEED A MASSIVE ACT OF CONSCIENCE

"The greatest thing that could possibly come out of the events of September 11th is for a massive act of conscience to erupt across America," says Robert Thompson, chair of the Parliament of World Religions. Find out why at

http://lakestreet.org/pages/sermons/we_need_a_massive_act_of_conscie.htm

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The discussion of national holidays has been fascinating, and it has been particularly interesting reading about the national holidays of other countries.

It is July 4 and I feel that I would be remiss if I did not respond to several comments that I have some disagreement with. The following quote I think typifies an idea that was brought up in several posts:

Often times, when one raises concerns about U.S. policies or their ramifications, one is seen as unamerican by some who wave the flag most patriotically on the 4th of July. The message seems to be that any criticism of the country is tantamount to disloyalty or treason. Comments like "If you don't like the U.S., why don't you just move >someplace else?" are common.

Common? Where? I have been an educator for 27 years, have been involved in many social discussions and debates over the years (including marching against the Vietnam war as a college student during the early seventies) all over the country. With few exceptions I would have to say that I have never found the people of this country to be inhospitable to debate and discussion. If some people feel that "any criticism" that they give of this country is "tantamount to ... treason", I have to note that this, in my experience, would be very atypical. Debates and discussions are a central feature of this democracy. One need only go to a bookstore and see "The Nation" sitting next to "National Review", "Commentary" next to "Dissent", the essay collections of William F. Buckley next to Noam Chomsky's. Turn to C-SPAN'S "Washington Journal" to hear viewer disagreements with prominent figures, watch Lehrer every night, read the editorial pages in any major city paper. Browse the Internet. You will find discussion, dissent, criticism. The public square has been an American tradition and our continual debates have always been an important, indeed essential, part of this democracy.

To me July fourth is a celebration of not only the founding of this country but the freedom that has evolved with it. Beginning with the limited (although vitally important) notions of freedom that people like Thomas Paine

and Jefferson wrote of, it has evolved with the ministers, like Roger Williams, who fought for separation of church and state, the abolitionists who sought to bring freedom to slaves, women who seized upon the idea of freedom to extend it and improve it, to immigrant groups, leaders in the civil rights movement, etc., etc. The story of freedom in America is not a static story; it is one that is continually evolving and growing. Far from being a country that dislikes or stifles dissent, I see America as a country that relishes and even demands it.

Best, Lee

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I have really enjoyed reading everyone's posts about independence day and what it means to everyone.

As for myself, Independence Day has never really been considered a major holiday up until this year. I have been thinking about why this is as I read your posts and I think one of the reasons for it is due to my travels. As many of the people in the group, I have travelled extensively. I have usually stayed in hostels where I was able to enjoy the company of people from around the globe but one thing that came out of this was a lack of pride in my country. I cannot count how many times I have been in conversations overseas with people who have put the U.S. down in every way, shape, or form.

After awhile I wouldn't even tell people I was a U.S. citizen in order to skirt being put down. As I mentioned in another post, it seems like it is almost trendy to knock the United States even if the people don't know anything about this country. Then September 11th happened. The month following the terror attacks on the U.S. I was in Amsterdam for a short trip and found the intolerance of the U.S. was at its pinnacle (from my point of view that is- im sure there have been other times in history such as during Vietnam that we weren't looked at in a very favorable light). I felt very uncomfortable and didn't tell a soul I was from the U.S.. I look back now and I am embarassed by that.

I am proud of the United States and most of what it stands for. As many of you have pointed out, one can be proud of their country but at the same time not agree with some of the actions which it takes.....but, we can say that. We are free to say what we want, free to dream, free to take risks, free to think differently than our neighbor, and free to be ourselves. It's not only that we have all of these freedoms but rather our culture and society promotes those freedoms and is built on those freedoms.

The issue of tolerance has come up in some of the posts and I want to touch on that. I believe in tolerance of views other than my own. I do not have to accept them and I feel free to challenge views but at the same time, I believe everyone has the right to their own views. How are we to decide what views we tolerate and which we don't as a society? who are we to determine that? I am presently living in the Upstate section of South Carolina. This is the heart of the bible belt in America and what people tolerate here is a lot different than what they tolerate in other parts of the country.

Getting back to my thoughts on July 4th, my view this year has totally

changed as I now see this as a day to sit back and ponder the world and our place in it. I am proud to be an American and when I travel overseas next week if someone asks where I am from, I guarantee I will not hesitate to say the United States.

Pete

P.S. Thanks to everyone for your help regarding the computer problems I was having with this course...your suggestions were invaluable. Thank you Merry for getting the time-out extended.

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Nigeria became nominally independent on October 1, 1960 after close to a century of British rule. Since I became an adult the parades and speeches have progressively lost meaning as one group of military men /women in government have by their mendacity whittled away at those elements that confer pride on a people. October 1 has become, ultimately for me a celebration of our thralldom.

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Hello All!

Now that our holiday is over and I have had some time to think about our discussion topic, I am really in awe of how these national holidays around the world are so closely related to the nationalism of post-Colonial rule. Our independence day celebrates our freedom from British (and European) governance and colonialism. It is difficult for us now to even imagine the struggle, sacrifice and loss our forefathers went through in order to achieve such goal. We owe are independence to the poor farming immigrants and the native Americans living all over the eastern U.S. and Midwest. They sacrificed life and limb, food and family.

Growing up in the military, we always show our patriotic sentiments on July 4th. We fly the American flag and sometimes there is a gathering of my father's old military buddies - the ones who are still in town or who are still interested in keeping up their relationships. My grandfather fought in World War II and the Korean War. My father fought in Vietnam and my spouse fought in the Gulf War. I have a family of disenchanting veterans. It is possible that I would feel more patriotic had I put my life on the line for the United States, as have many of my relatives. In fact, I sometimes feel that they have better information to base their critiques of the U.S. than I, because of their first hand experience. But keeping this in mind, I am very happy to live in a country where we can voice our critiques, regardless of our background, experience, education or status. However, I don't see any of these facts reflected in how we celebrate the holiday.

In fact, one striking difference that I see from our discussion is from our cultural consultants. When they speak of their national holidays, they have details of how and why their holiday came about, which seems to strike a sense of pride in their comments. As far as I can tell, we don't have any type of historical association with this holiday - not even in our news media. Holiday education focuses on fireworks safety and traffic patterns. Even after 9/11, the holiday does not instill many patriotic feelings in me, I think mainly because I don't have any type

of nationalistic or patriotic history with which to associate it. So this year, I went on a quest to educate myself. I found some good information on the history of July 4th on the net which I will share with you below (be aware that in typical American fashion, there is lots of pop-up advertising at all of these sites):

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/jul04.html> This site has lots of factual information, but not much in the way of tying all the facts together. It is good for a basic education on July 4th.

<http://wilstar.com/holidays/july4.htm> Interesting information on the historical documents, which led up to American independence.

<http://www.usacitylink.com/usa/?file=/citylink/usa/week11.html> This is an interesting quiz that we all can take on our knowledge of American historical facts! (I missed two!)

http://www.netglimse.com/holidays/independence_day/the_history_of_independence_day.shtml Simple timeline that can be used in the classroom.

There are many more links. Just put "Independence Day History" into the Yahoo! Search field and you can get all the information you need. Thanks for letting me share.

Sincerely,
Peter

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We need to teach our students to investigate for themselves our relationships with other nations. I believe that we can be responsible citizens even though we may be ignorant as to what is going on in the world. Not everyone can be a leader. Global education should be implemented into the curriculum of k-12 because it allows us to be more accepting of all cultures and ethnicities. Textbooks for elementary could start using more diverse pictures and such so kids could start to question why people do not look like them and/or act like them.

Tom

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Is nationalism a good thing or a bad thing? Yes! I guess it provides a broader sense of identity and belonging than tribalism, yet provides another good excuse for war...

Anna

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Thanks for sharing your thoughts and experiences. I'm glad you will stop hesitating to say you're American. I think we all need to be all of who we

are, and that others should respect that. I think that if they are worthy of your respect other people regardless of nationality should understand that Americans, like other nationalities, are all different from each other and should be judged as individuals

Kay
