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To honor America's 250th birthday- We need liberty for all

Stephan Brigidi Guest Columnist

It is more than ironic that as we look to celebrate the 250th anniversary of American independence the current social-political climate is under threat by a dominant power much like King George in 1776. It is more than strange that the liberty and freedom from that monarch is now led by a similar domestic tyrannical force, defying the constitutional order that followed the formal Declaration of Independence, resulting in the birth of a nation. Today, this very nation is under siege from within. The rights that were fought for on the bloodied battlefields are under grave risk of being eliminated. We have entered a new system of oppression with a mockery made of Lady Liberty's carved words of welcome to the huddled and poor masses to come to America, the land of the free.

It is true that the words set forth in the historic documents of all men being created equal rang hollow, as they were intended exclusively for white men of European background. Indigenous peoples and the kidnapped Africans were deliberately not included in the equation of all men. In fact, all men were not inclusive of white women either. All such points may be revisited and debated, but in 2026 with this anniversary time, we have an immense opportunity to basically set the record straight. America must reckon and recognize its past to truly move forward and celebrate the real meaning of liberty in defense of human rights –all human rights without distinction or qualification.

We have the opportunity to celebrate with the fullest sincerity that, indeed, men and women of all stripes and colors, and those whose gender definitions have different meanings, be acknowledged and accepted without question. All caste systems must cease to understand the true realization of liberty. Honesty and truth have suffered greatly the past 10 years as lies; deception and fraud have become more prevalent – a new norm. We cannot dismiss such things as 'alternative facts,' it's too serious to scoff at or laugh off. We as a people, all people, must confront what has been allowed to happen and bring about a return to decency, kindness, respect and truth. Call these universal as well as American values.

It is the wrong path to rekindle a distorted Monroe Doctrine plan of domination under the guise of independence. Rather, we must rebuild the world as Mark Carney, the bold leader of Canada, professes into a rekindled Marshall Plan to nurture the earth and its peoples everywhere. We must seek a true new world order that allows for healing and sharing of resources, helping those who are hungry and sick. This requires strong will, and a turning away of self-interests. It is not about America first, but about America leading to bring about the bold change that is needed with real fair-trade practices and combining resources. It is simple to understand that we all benefit by such a path. Hostilities can cease and cooperation flourish. This is real power.

The United States of America can lead to set the example and tone of civility. Our allies would quickly join, and so too, cause adversaries to open their eyes to such cooperative living. This is not some idealistic dream. It is possible by opening our hearts and minds to this reality and make it happen. We do have the power and the might.

We, in approaching this anniversary, have the great opportunity to reclaim the spirit of what the American Revolution stood for and declare a renewal of an all-inclusive Declaration of Independence. Let us begin in all our communities in Rhode Island and demand that our state follow as well in honoring the dignity of humanity, make reparation for past mistakes and reconcile, accepting the immigrant nation that we are, and come together to define and embrace real liberty. It is within our grasp.

Stephan Brigidi is a retired professor of photography and aesthetics.

