

*Sentinel editorial***Liberty for all...**

At the risk of getting too serious on this day of major celebrations, we offer several historic quotes:

- *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."* – **Thomas Jefferson.**

- *"The basis of our political system is the right of the people to make and alter their constitutions of government."* – **George Washington's Farewell Address, Sept. 17, 1796.**

- *"America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves."* – **Abraham Lincoln.**

- *"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."* – **Benjamin Franklin.**

- *"I may not agree with what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it."* – **Patrick Henry**

These remarks were not made by men who were perfect. The words were obviously the embodiment of an ideal for a way of life.

They were also, in retrospect, hypocrisies because the words were mouthed in times when white men enslaved black men, women and children, and *all* women were considered inferior – not bright enough to make their own decisions, handle their own money or decide on any level who should run this nation.

Some of those who spoke with such wisdom – such as Washington and Jefferson – were slaveholders themselves. And even Lincoln did not set out to free the slaves but only to stop the spread of slavery.

When the earliest of these famous men took their initial stands for independence, they focused on white, Protestant landholders as the equals. And despite all the grand

words pointing the way toward democracy, the Colonists toyed with anointing Washington as king – an idea he spurned.

Most of us believe that these men believed deeply in what they did and said, that they were men of vision looking ahead to a time when equality for *all* actually would encompass *all*.

But sometimes the thought intrudes that our founding fathers might be quite surprised to find out our Declaration has become more true and our Constitution has endured with amendments

So we should count ourselves really lucky that the words took root and grew to encompass *all*... even though some in today's society haven't yet grasped the concept. And we should be somewhat in awe of Washington, who apparently foresaw that the Constitution would have to change – as it has through amendments – in order to continue to be a force to live by.

But there is still another quote to consider.

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'" Martin Luther King Jr. said those words.

King spoke out time and time again regardless of the danger, giving meaning to Lincoln's thought that "To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men."

Both died for their decisions not to suffer in silence.

No doubt about it, liberty is for the bold and the brave; it must be constantly protected and defended.

So celebrate independence today. Then get back to the fight of helping to lift others to live under equality's glow every day.