



For a first-generation American immigrant like me, Independence Day has a particularly profound significance. Beyond the festive gatherings, barbecues, and fireworks, this holiday hearkens back to my family's journey to the U.S. more than 35 years ago, in search of a more promising future.

While enjoying a happy and stable childhood in Armenia – one of 15 republics constituting the former Soviet Union – I was perplexed by my parents' decision to forego the relative comfort and safety of our homeland to "start from scratch" in the US. This disillusionment was only exacerbated by witnessing the daily hardships of my parents as they struggled to establish a new life for our family in a "foreign" land. It wasn't until years later that I began to appreciate their courageous decision to uproot and leave behind all with which they were familiar, in search of independence from the restrictive Soviet regime and the opportunity to shape our own destiny.

Of course, this opportunity would not be possible without the ideals of our Founding Fathers and the groundwork they laid for a democratic society. While the "American Experiment" has always been a work in progress – and we continue on the perpetual journey toward liberty, equity, and justice – Independence Day serves as a keen

reminder of our nation's indomitable spirit and unrelenting commitment to the freedom of its people. During the holiday weekend, let's take a moment to recognize the blessing of being able to call America our home, where we are granted the liberty to be ourselves, express our identities and perspectives, pursue our passions with vigor, and champion the causes most dear to us. These same principles are inextricably tied to our work at Pepperdine, as we endeavor to sustain a vibrant culture of belonging and provide an environment conducive to the intellectual, social, and spiritual transformation of our students.

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, NIV).

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