

## The Interdependence of Independence

by Lois Powell  
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I love fireworks. I always have, ever since I was a young child sitting in my Dad's lap watching the flares of color, hearing the booms of thundering sound, and feeling the reverberations in my chest as the stunning displays burst above our heads. Dad loved fireworks and shared his thrill with us and we always felt safe, never scared.

This July 4, Independence Day in the United States, firework displays will pop up all across the country, in large city and small town, filling the air with color and sound. It's what we do on July 4 to celebrate those "bombs bursting in air" in 1776 when the colonists fought the British to win independence from the crown. It's our big day.

But I wonder - to what extent have we romanticized this independence in ways that overlook the real core of being human which is to be interdependent? The settlers who came to the Americas from Europe, who became the colonists in the Massachusetts Bay Colony or Virginia or New York, and who then revolted against the control of the English crown over their lives, seeking independence and freedom, are heralded as courageous and righteous heroes against an oppressive regime.

But these are the same settlers who could not respect or honor the independence and rights of the indigenous peoples they encountered when their boats landed on the eastern shores. These are the same settlers whose economic strength was built through the institution of slavery which they established and ran like a well-oiled machine for more than 400 years. The social narrative they created and sustained gave them, as descendants of Europeans, superiority over everyone else and therefore the "right" to impose subjugation to those native to this land and those native to Africa.

That is not the independence I want to celebrate. Instead, I want to celebrate that core of what it means to be human. I want to celebrate interdependence, that web of life of which we are all a part and without which we perish. I want to celebrate how we see in each other, across all the lines and barriers we have established to keep us from each other – race, income level, nationality, ethnic affiliation, religion, gender, sexual identity, etc. – the other “me” whom I need in order to survive.

My parents were two very different personalities and yet their marriage was as healthy and strong as any I have ever known. They once described themselves as being “independently interdependent,” a relationship built upon mutual respect, trust and honor which also allowed each to be who they were.

Can you imagine what our country and our world would be like if we valued interdependence as much as we do independence? Would justice pour down like water, then, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream? I believe they would.

Watching fireworks this July 4, I will celebrate our interdependence as a global human family – a multicolored, lively display of humanity which is brilliant seen together. Will you join me?

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Lois Powell is Executive Associate of Special Projects.*

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