

God's Hope for America Bus Tour - Independence Day

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Almost every year, come July 4th, people who know or have recently come to learn that I originally hail from Britain ask me, with varying degrees of truculence, “So, how do you feel about Independence Day?” What I think they sometimes really mean to say is “How do you feel about Independence Day, loser?”

On one level the question is easy to answer. I’ve lived in the US for the past 22 years, and I and all my family are proud United States citizens. So, I love Independence Day, and I love America. It’s my home. Moreover—and native-born Americans may be surprised to learn this—I don’t think you’ll find many of my fellow Britons who feel regret on Independence Day. America has long been our friend and ally, and we rejoice in its many freedoms.”

At the same time, I’ll confess that Independence Day also sometimes makes me uneasy. Despite our best intentions, America hasn’t always conducted itself well in the global village. True, we are often generous and willing givers, spending American time and treasure to try to improve the lot of many other nations, and to support developments in agriculture, science and education. Millions of people all over the world still long to come to America, and a small but significant proportion are willing to do so without proper documentation, despite the difficulty and uncertainty that accompanies it.

Travelling the highways and byways of the United States these last two weeks have given me a lot of opportunities to think about this country, and the future of our Unification Movement.

Our God’s Hope for America Holy Ground pilgrimage ended up celebrating July 4th in Mobile and Bayou La Batre, Alabama. We started with a prayer service at the Holy Ground in Mobile, established by Rev. Sun Myung Moon a half century ago in 1965 in what was then an obscure and poorly maintained park. Today, it has been lovingly transformed into a fine Japanese Garden, a place of real beauty perfect for both meditation and prayer.

This transformation is both inspiring and ironic, since just two generations ago Japan was a bitter enemy of USA. We still recall Pearl Harbor day each year as a ‘day of infamy.’ Though I’ve been happily

married for 32 years to a wonderful Japanese woman, I still find myself having to guard my tongue extra carefully on that day.

Our service yesterday however, reflected the beauty and unity in the diversity and plurality of our modern American culture. We had moving prayers from a Muslim Imam and Christian pastors, from public officials and community leaders, from Africans, Europeans and Asians, young and old. We listened to a reading of the stirring words of Rev. Moon when he first started his tireless campaign to spread the gospel of peace in these United States:

“In the sight of God, there is no black; there is no white; there is no yellow. We must look at the human race as God sees it. America must return to the true founding spirit of the nation, to the ideals which her ancestors sought to establish with sweat and blood. God is the motivation, the cause and the foundation of the independence of America. America was born through the Providence of God. If we are centered upon God, we will remain united and enjoy prosperity. However, as soon as we turn away from God, we will be divided.”

America is God’s Hope, Yankee Stadium, June 1, 1976.

Though he deeply loved America as his second home, Father Moon often said that he could see in our nation so many things ‘unacceptable in the sight of God.’ Surely today, that list is even longer than it was. So the real question we Americans should ask on Independence Day, and every day, is not how we, or any other person or nation feels about it, but “How does God feel about America? About our Independence Day?”

For my part, I am quite confident that God still feels hopeful about America, is still longing for us to fulfill our destined duty and responsibility to lead the world toward the day of peace when all men and women live as one family. Over the past two weeks, I’ve met many fine people, from all backgrounds, who agree with me, and the fundamental premise of this “God’s Hope for America” pilgrimage.

But I’ve also met many others who have said, quite candidly, that this ideal is too much, too high, too far, and just too plain unrealistic to have any real impact in their daily lives. They struggle with their own lives and say they don’t have faith that God is still leading this nation forward.

My response? I agree! World peace is too lofty a goal for any of us! So let’s start small! Rev. and Mrs. Moon encouraged us to make our homes into churches, into places where God’s love could dwell. They told us to begin by loving one person, one family, and learn how to make a difference in their lives, to share with them the divine principles of true love, and back up those fine words with concrete actions of caring and goodness.

Everyone one of us can do that, no matter what our situation or background. If we commit to do so from this day, then this will be an Independence Day that God can feel good about!