

## **Independence Day: Reflecting on the Principles that Define America**

Life Repurposed Podcast

[michellerayburn.com/July4](http://michellerayburn.com/July4)

Host/speaker Michelle Rayburn

Speaker A [00:00:02]:

Hi, friends. I'm popping in here with a short bonus episode of Life Repurposed just for Independence Day. It is actually the fourth of July when I'm recording this, and I got behind the microphone this morning to leave a few reflections about today's celebration. On this day, Americans reflect on the principles of freedom, liberty, self-governance, all the things that our country was founded on. Independence Day represents the collective spirit and determination of the American people as well as the sacrifices made by those who fought for our independence.

Speaker A [00:01:12]:

Today serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for equality and justice and then inspires us as citizens to cherish and defend the democratic values that make America unique. Independence Day is not only a time for barbecues, parades, fireworks—I'll tell you those have been going off all night long around my neighborhood—but this is also an opportunity to reflect on the ideals that unite the diverse nation, and it's a time to renew our commitment to upholding those ideals for generations to come.

Throughout history, the United States has been a melting pot of diverse cultures, religions, and beliefs. This diversity is one of the cornerstones of American society. It's what makes this nation so unique and so vibrant. One of the fundamental principles this country was founded on is the freedom to choose. The freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, and freedom of thought. These freedoms are included in the first amendment to the United States Constitution.

Speaker A [00:02:13]:

And yet despite the clear distinction between freedom of religion and the establishment of a state religion, there is a misconception that America is a Christian nation. Yes. Christianity has played a significant role in shaping the cultural landscape of the United States. But it's also important to recognize that this country was not founded to promote any particular religion. The freedom to choose is a value that goes beyond any specific religious belief. It's a cornerstone of American democracy, and the reason why people from all walks of life and faith have sought refuge and opportunity on these shores. It's the freedom to choose our own path, to hold beliefs that resonate with their own conscience and to express those beliefs without fear of persecution. The beauty of our nation lies in its ability to embrace and respect religious and philosophical diversity.

Speaker A [00:03:08]:

It's not about imposing our personal beliefs on others but recognizing that each individual has the right to their own spiritual journey. By upholding this principle, we ensure that no 1 is

marginalized or -- based on their faith or lack thereof. True freedom also goes beyond our religious beliefs. It means having the freedom to live authentically without fear of discrimination or prejudice. Of course, freedom does not imply freedom from consequences or responsibilities, Our actions and our choices impact others, and they have consequences. And, of course, this country is not a free-for-all. It may feel like that sometimes, but it is not. We, as a nation of people, exercise our freedom responsibly, and we have respect for the rights and dignity of others.

Speaker A [00:03:58]:

I know that's sounding idealist, but that is really what we're founded on. It's a delicate balance between ideals and reality, but This is a balance that's crucial for maintaining a harmonious and inclusive society. So what does it mean to live in a country where freedom about everyone having the freedom to choose, it means embracing diversity. Recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of every individual and fostering an environment where open dialogue and respectful disagreement are encouraged. It means understanding that religious freedom is not about giving one faith privilege over another, but rather it's about ensuring that every person has the right to worship or not worship as they see fit.

It means acknowledging that freedom to choose is not limited to matters of faith, but it encompasses every aspect of our lives. For a lot of my life, I lived under the guiding principle that my role was to do everything I could to bring people to my point of view. And that protecting religious freedom meant Christian rights.

Speaker A [00:05:02]:

But I've come to see that harmony includes loving, and respecting people who are different from me. And this has been a journey for me. It has been a life repurposed journey. And so that's why I'm bringing this up today and why I'm making this bonus episode for you. I just wanted to give my thoughts, and you can take them or leave them for what you will. Christians, like any individuals, have the capacity to be open minded and willing to change their perspectives.

Embracing open mindedness means acknowledging that our understanding of issues is not fixed, and it's not immune to growth. And for me, there's been a lot of growth.

Speaker A [00:05:37]:

There have been a lot of changes in my mindset and point of view that I thought were fixed in me, and I've changed a lot. And this kind of repurposing requires a willingness to engage in thoughtful dialogue, to listen to differing viewpoints, and to critically evaluate our own beliefs. And by critically, that means looking at them and questioning, asking, why do I think this way? Is this something I've really thought out or if I just repeated something I was taught for many years?

By remaining open to new information, new experiences, and diverse perspectives, we can deepen our understanding of complex issues and involve our perspectives accordingly. Mine

have evolved a lot. This open mindedness allows us to approach political discussions in a different way. We can practice humility, empathy, and we can have a genuine desire to seek common ground and pursue policies that align with the core values of love, justice, compassion. So on this Independence Day, I pause to remind myself that a repurposed life includes exploring, understanding, pivoting, and changing where necessary. Freedom is not a fixed destination, but an ongoing pursuit.

Speaker A [00:06:53]:

It's a tapestry that weaves the stories and experiences of us all. And I'm thankful to live in a country where that's possible. Until next time, keep questioning, keep learning, and keep cherishing the freedom to choose. Happy Independence Day!