

My journey so far described in a sentence would be. I am seeking a life of freedom. Ironically, my ancestors would say the same. I guess that's what it means to be "black" in America. The pursuit of happiness is a phrase that continuously pops into my head. When writing the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson was accompanied by his household staff, which is a nice way to say his slaves. You have to wonder about the words he wrote, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To me, they represent an undertone in America. One man in that room had "life". One man would be forced to fight for "liberty". However, each believed in the pursuit of happiness. Those men epitomized how their races would be treated in what would become America.

If you are left wondering which one would be forced to fight for liberty. Do you know who the first person who was killed in the Boston Massacre and technically the first American killed in the American Revolution? His name Crispus Attucks, his race African American. Individuals such as Frederick Douglass used Attucks's memory to build support to end slavery and push for equal rights in America.

Do you see the pattern? Do you see the irony?

The killing of a black man is used to fight for the fair treatment of another black man or woman.

July 4th, 1776 the Declaration of Independence was issued and the man who had life was taking his independence. However, we are gathered here on June 19th for the man who was forced to fight for liberty. The exact date we are celebrating is June 19th, 1865. This is the day Texas, the last state practicing slavery, ended slavery which was the ending of slavery in the United States.

Juneteenth besides all the celebration is a day for education. This is a great day to ask the tough question, the why. Why is our society this way? Why does equality have to be fought for and not given? Why is so much history left out of classroom textbooks? I had a history professor in college who said, "Winner write history". Those three words have stuck with me and I hope they stick with you.

My personal belief is education is the key to changing the world around you. Become informed, encourage curiosity, and demand answers. W.E.B. Du Bois once said "Either America will destroy ignorance or Ignorance will destroy America".

Let me leave you with this hundreds of years later from the start of the United States, life is given every day, liberty is perspective based, but pursuit of happiness still lives within a place of hope.

-Gordon Wallace Jr