



## ORIGINS OF INDEPENDENCE DAY

Independence Day commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, by the Continental Congress declaring that the 13 American colonies were no longer part of the British Empire. The Declaration summarized the reasons the colonies were severing their political ties to Great Britain. July 2, 1776, is the day that the Continental Congress actually voted for independence. John Adams, in his writings, even noted that July 2 would be remembered in the annals of American history and would be marked with fireworks and celebrations. The written Declaration of Independence was dated July 4 but wasn't actually signed until August 2.

## CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Declaration captured the spirit of the newly independent nation. The eloquent words of the preamble set high expectations that continue to be challenged as our nation matures. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

History reveals how this lofty document became the launching pad for the civil rights movement. The unalienable rights have been systematically denied to Black Americans as evidenced by the ongoing battles required to protect the right to vote, fair housing, jobs, education and other resources inherent in the right to the pursuit of happiness.

Eleven years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Constitution was signed by 39 of the 55 delegates on September 17, 1787. At least one delegate refused to sign because the Constitution codified and protected slavery and slave trade. The acceptance of

slavery by the authors of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution still casts a shadow over American democracy.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ENDING RACISM

On July 5, 1852, Frederick Douglass gave his famous speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" He refused to honor the Fourth of July but wanted to use the occasion to make people think about the fact that 76 years after the Declaration of Independence was ratified, Black Americans were still experiencing oppression, not freedom.

Ending Racism USA will continue to share historical information, real life stories and opportunities for engagement and advocacy to build bridges of understanding with others who share the belief and are willing to declare that we are all created equal and entitled to the rights embodied in our founding documents.

Image: Declaration of Independence, oil on canvas by John Trumbull, 1818, for the Rotunda of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.



Scan the QR code to explore our digital calendar and learn more about significant dates in July.

Ending  
**RACISM** USA  
**July 2025**

**Advocacy in Action**

Calling all bookworms! Start or join a book club that focuses on literature by authors from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. Each month, read and discuss a book that offers insights into different cultural experiences and histories. Find book recommendations at the Diverse BookFinder: <https://diversebookfinder.org/>

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ratified in 1971) *	2	3	4 Independence Day	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

\* July 1, 1971 - 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ratified in 1971): This amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, ensuring that young adults could exercise their right to vote.