

Independence, Patriotism and Freedom[®]

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UUCOD Worship Leader: Brian Joyner

Chalice Reading

I want to share with you how the chalice became the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated as President of the United States at a time when people in this country were suffering from the worst economic crisis in our history. Under similar economic circumstances, Adolf Hitler took power in Germany.

Although most Americans were more focused on what was happening at home, at the annual meeting of the American Unitarian Association in May of 1933, the convention passed a resolution stating that Unitarians "greatly deplore the persecution of the Jews in Germany as a violation of equity, tolerance, and humanity."

Two years later, the Universalist General Convention adopted a resolution expressing sympathy for the persecuted Jews in Nazi Germany and noting their "abhorrence of religious and economic persecution." These concerns were not generally shared in the then-isolationist United States, where anti-Semitism was widespread.

In October 1938, following the approval of the Munich Treaty by Germany, France, England, and Italy, Hitler annexed the portion of Czechoslovakia known as the Sudetenland. The Unitarian leadership was stunned by the betrayal of a model democratic state whose first lady, Charlotte Masaryk, was a Unitarian from New York. Moreover, the denomination had close ties to Czech Unitarians and to members of the liberal National Czechoslovak Church.

The desire to "do something" was strong and in December of 1938, the board of directors of the American Unitarian Association (AUA) approved the plan of Dr. Robert Dexter, director of the AUA's Department of Social Relations, for a "service mission to Czechoslovakia."

In February of 1939, Martha and Waitstill Sharp sailed for Europe as representatives of the AUA "to see what could be done." Waitstill was minister of the Wellesley Hills, Mass., Unitarian Church and Martha had a degree in social work. They arrived in Prague on February 23 hoping to help some of the 250,000

refugees who had poured into that city from the Sudetenland and elsewhere. Within three weeks, they stood in the streets of Prague with thousands of others watching the Nazi troops march in to take over the whole country.

For five more months, the Sharps carried out a rescue and relief operation. They tried to match endangered people with job opportunities outside the country so that they would be eligible for exit visas, and they gave funds to the Czech Unitarian Church and to various relief organizations. Their rescue list included intellectuals, students, and anti-Nazi political leaders. The Sharps left Europe on August 30. Before they reached New York, Germany had invaded Poland and World War II was under way.

In May 1940, Germany invaded France, and within six weeks, Hitler's tanks had rolled into Paris.

An Austrian artist named Hans Deutsch lived in Paris at that time. He was well known for his cartoons highly critical of Adolf Hitler, so with Germany in control of French capital, he abandoned everything and fled to the South of France, then to Spain and finally with an altered passport to Portugal.

There, he met the Reverend Charles Joy, executive director of the Unitarian Service Committee (USC). From his Lisbon headquarters, Joy oversaw a secret network of couriers and agents.

Deutsch was most impressed and soon was working for the USC. He later wrote to Joy:

There is something that urges me to tell you... how much I admire your utter self-denial [and] readiness to serve, to sacrifice all, your time, your health, your well-being, to help, help, help.

I am not what you may actually call a believer. But if your kind of life is the profession of your faith—as it is, I feel sure—then religion, ceasing to be magic and mysticism, becomes confession to practical philosophy and—what is more—to active, really useful social work. And this religion—with or without a heading—is one to which even a 'godless' fellow like myself can say wholeheartedly, Yes!

The Unitarian Service Committee was an unknown organization in 1941. This was a special handicap in the cloak-and-dagger world, where establishing trust quickly across barriers of language, nationality, and faith could mean life instead of death. Disguises, signs and countersigns, and midnight runs across guarded borders were the means of freedom in those days. Joy asked Deutsch to create a symbol for

their papers "to make them look official, to give dignity and importance to them, and at the same time to symbolize the spirit of our work.... When a document may keep a man out of jail, give him standing with governments and police, it is important that it look important."

With pencil and ink Hans Deutsch drew the image of a chalice with a flame.

The flaming chalice design was made into a seal for papers and a badge for agents moving refugees to freedom. In time it became a symbol of Unitarian Universalism all around the world.

When Deutsch designed the flaming chalice, he had never seen a Unitarian or Universalist church or heard a sermon. What he had seen was faith in action—people who were willing to risk all for others in a time of urgent need.

Chalice Lighting

As we light this chalice, may we be reminded of our commitment to independence:

We value the free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
And the right of conscience and use of the democratic process.
But may we always remember our respect for interdependence;
We aspire to a world community
with peace, liberty and justice for all.

As we celebrate the high ideals of our nation, shall we never accept that our best days are behind us. We are a people of action.

Opening Words

Welcome to our Independence Day service. It's said that the purpose of church is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

I think about all the times I've sat in the church pews and listened to Sunday sermons. Never would I have imagined that one day I would be able, as out gay man (married) to be a leader in a church.

After this week, we all need a little bit of comfort. Take a couple minutes and chat with your neighbor. Tell each other one thing that you love about this country.

Now that we've all been comforted a little bit, Let us worship.

Prayer and Meditation

Our prayer today comes from Reverend Sara Lawall, A UU minister in Boise, Idaho

Spirit of Life and Love,
In this time of uncertainty
Of fear and angst
Our nation holds its collective breath

In this time
When alternative facts become accepted
And words lead to violence
Our nation clenches its fists
Tightens its shoulders
Eyes squeezed shut

May we remember we are a people of resilience
We have faced uncertainty before
We have weathered storms
We have been consumed by flames
We have risen like the phoenix from the ashes
And we will again

For we are a people who resist

May we remember our shared humanity
Our universal kinship; our interdependence
As we unclench our fists and breathe together
Breathing in love and breathing out peace

May we recognize the spark of the divine inside all of us
Even those we are not quite sure about

For we are a people of compassion.

In this time of uncertainty
We remember the good will go on
As we work to move forward together

Seeking that which unites us
With our arms reaching out wide
For life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

Love will prevail.
For we are a people of action

Second Reading.

One afternoon in Greenville, South Carolina, when I was 9 years old, my father was raking leaves. The man came outside to offer us a drink of water, and when he left I asked, "Why does that man speak differently from us?"

"He's German," said my father, and he stopped and leaned on his rake. "He's German. I fought in Europe so they could have freedom. I'm proud to be a veteran of that war." His eyes clouded over. "But now he's here, and he can vote, and I cannot. I helped free his people, now I'm raking his leaves.

"True Patriot" by Rev. Jesse Jackson

It is a paradox of the human spirit that even after such brutal oppression and disregard for human rights, we are still so patriotic and love our country so much. It is our land; we cultivated it and helped to build it. But it is not our government. Indeed, fighting for a better government is the patriotic thing to do.

America at its best guarantees opportunity, and so fighting to expand the horizons of oppressed people is an act of patriotism. Yet too often, those who dare expand our nation's democracy and make it true to our principles are victims of naked aggression, aggression led not by street fighters but by the White House, Congress and the courts.

Yet, those who have fought for the highest and best principles of our country, the true patriots, have been vilified and crucified. The true patriots invariably disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed, and are persecuted in their lifetimes even as their accomplishments are applauded after their deaths.

Today, politicians are proud to pronounce that we have abolished slavery. But in its time, slavery was the political center, and abolitionists were punished for their moral strength. Today, politicians hold up the gains of women. Yet in its time, denial of the vote to women was the political center; the women's suffrage movement sought the moral center, and was punished for its patriotism. Those who fight for civil rights, open housing, environmental laws, peace and international cooperation, and veterans of domestic wars—the true patriots—receive no parades.

We must never relinquish our sense of justice for a false sense of national pride. "My country right or wrong" is neither moral nor intelligent. Patriotism is support for the highest ideals of the nation, not for whoever happens to be in the White House. As citizens we must continue to fight for justice and equality so that we might make a better nation and a better world. We must give credence to our invitation: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," for the character of our nation is rooted in the affirmation of those ideals for all of our people.

SERMON

I'll admit that I get a little uncomfortable with all of the patriotic hoopla surrounding the 4th of July. I love our country but not in the same way that I feel like I should. I don't feel like a good American or a good patriot.

Yet I'll admit that I tear up a little bit almost every time when I hear a good rendition of the Star Spangled Banner (think Whitney Houston or Jennifer Hudson at the Super Bowl). But I believe that those who kneel during our national anthem are as patriotic, if not more so than.

So this word patriot. Is this something that we need to shy away from or run towards. Is this a word to avoid or a word to retake.

A patriot is a fighter.

I see so many patriots in this room.
We are fighters. So what are we fighting for?

Let's talk about freedom.

This message is an introduction to a four-part series based on the Four Freedoms as espoused by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his 1941 state of the Union address.

Although our nation was not yet at war in January 1941, FDR used his annual message to Congress to proclaim the Four Freedoms as a de facto war standard to one and all.

FDR's aspiration for the United States was to create a world where everyone everywhere had four essential freedoms:

- The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.
- The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.
- The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.
- The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.

Building on his reflections into the nature of freedom in the months beforehand, he enumerated for his audience each of the freedoms, stressing that they were not just a national ideal, but one that was needed “everywhere in the world.”

Despite these highly public moments, however, the concept of the Four Freedoms failed to resonate on Capitol Hill, in journalistic reports, or even with the American public.

It was not until 1943 when Norman Rockwell painted his Four Freedoms that Americans could really understand what they were fighting for and why the Four Freedoms were so important to the country and the world.

This year is the 75th anniversary of Rockwell's Four Freedoms paintings, and the

Norman Rockwell museum invited contemporary artists to reinterpret these four freedoms, and in that spirit the worship committee has planned a four-part series.

Over the course of four more Sundays, congregants and guest speakers will examine each of these freedoms and provide:

Overview

History

Big issues today

Call to action

Today, we will look at the historical context for these Four Freedoms and talk about their impact on American's views about World War II and America's role in the world. I hope that this series will inform you, inspire you, surprise you and even challenge you.

Chapter Two

Let us begin by looking at the historical background for these Four Freedoms.

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in as president of the United States, just five weeks after Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Once in power, the Nazi party moved quickly to restrict Jewish life, while in the United States, Roosevelt rallied Americans, promising to rebuild a devastated economy.

Americans in 1933 were deeply afraid. They were afraid of being dragged into international conflicts: In the 1930s, Congress passed neutrality laws with overwhelming bipartisan support, proclaiming that the United States would remain isolated.

Twenty-five percent of American workers were unemployed. The Great Depression closed banks and wiped out savings. Americans starved on the streets. The land, beset by drought and dust storms, failed farmers. It's hard for Americans today to grasp the pervasive economic insecurity and fear during the Great Depression.

Many Americans also were afraid of anyone they perceived as being different or foreign, and many considered nonwhites as inferior. Throughout the 1930s, Congress could not pass an anti-lynching bill; Jim Crow laws (and customs)

reigned in many parts of the country; and Mexican immigrants and Mexican-American citizens were forcibly deported from California. Anti-Semitism rose throughout the decade, and many hotels, colleges, and private clubs restricted or prohibited Jews from visiting, attending, or becoming members.

In the spring of 1933, next to articles on Roosevelt's first hundred days, the New Deal legislation, and the repeal of prohibition, Americans could read front-page stories about Jews being kicked out of their jobs and beaten on the streets in Germany. Dozens of American newspapers had correspondents based in Germany who sent back vivid descriptions of what they were witnessing under the new Nazi leadership.

Americans read these articles, and despite all of their own problems, many grew concerned. Thousands of Americans attended anti-Nazi marches and rallies throughout the United States, protesting early persecutions, the boycott of Jewish stores, and Nazi book burnings. An American movement to boycott German-made goods and the stores that sold them began and lasted for nearly a decade, mainly in large cities on the east coast.

And between March and May 1933, tens of thousands of people—from 29 states and Washington, DC—signed petitions calling on the new Roosevelt administration to protest Nazi persecution of the Jews.

The petitioners included:

- The International Catholic Truth Society, which wrote that Nazi attacks against "thousands of native born German Jews should arouse the righteous indignation of every lover of humanity and of every believer in the brotherhood of man throughout the world."
- The citizens of Macon, Georgia, who wrote they "deplore the anti-Jewish atrocities and protest against the whole anti-Semitic movement in Germany" and, by petitioning, wanted to express "at least in a small way the Christian sentiment of the peoples of this community."
- Residents of Douglas, Arizona, who handwrote their names and addresses on petition sheets, asking their senator to "raise your voice in Congress to protest against the barbarities of the Hitler regime upon the Jews in Germany. Your active intercession may save the lives and the livelihood of thousands of innocent people."
- Members of the Orange Merchants Association of Orange, New Jersey, who

wrote they "deplore the reported acts of aggression, injustice, and violence towards Jews in Germany."

But we know what the authors do not: that the US government ultimately would not formally protest Nazi Germany in 1933—except to protect American citizens, dozens of whom were beaten on German streets, many because they were perceived to be Jewish. Within a few months, news of Nazi persecutions would move from the front page to the inside of newspapers. Most Americans outside of Jewish communities, even many of those who had signed petitions and joined marches, would stop paying close attention. Their worries over finding jobs and feeding their families, took precedence over concerns about persecution across the sea.

In 1938, Hitler's malevolent intentions in Europe became all but impossible to deny. In March, Nazi Germany swallowed up Austria through an act of annexation.

Six months later, Hitler demanded that Czechoslovakia hand over to him the Sudetenland, a large region adjacent to Germany populated by many German-speaking inhabitants. Though Czechoslovakia was prepared to fight to defend its borders, French leaders joined British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in traveling to Munich to negotiate a peaceful settlement with Hitler. (Czechoslovakia wasn't allowed to take part in the Munich conference.)

Hoping to appease Hitler by caving in to his demands, British and French negotiators allowed the German dictator to seize the Sudetenland in exchange for a worthless promise to abandon all plans for further territorial expansion. Chamberlain returned to London pleased with the deal, infamously proclaiming that the compromise had guaranteed "peace for our time."

But Chamberlain's confidence proved to be tragically misguided, and history's judgment of the appeasement at Munich has been deservedly harsh. Neville Chamberlain is remembered today as one of the most despised and ridiculed public figures of the 20th century. At the time, however, a large majority of 59% of the American people believed he had done "the best thing in giving in to Germany instead of going to war."⁵

Kristallnacht: The Beginning of the Holocaust

By late 1938, it became impossible to deny the violent intentions of Nazi policies toward Germany's Jews. Since rising to public prominence, Hitler had always engaged in venomously anti-Semitic rhetoric, and since 1933, he had imposed a series of discriminatory laws that stripped Jews of most civil rights. But until 1938, his hatred of the Jewish people had not yet led to widespread violence against them.

That changed on November 9th, 1938, forever remembered as Kristallnacht—the "Night of Broken Glass"—in which Nazi storm troopers and ordinary German citizens whipped into a fury by anti-Semitic propaganda organized a nationwide pogrom against Jewish homes, synagogues, and businesses. Across the whole of Germany, hundreds of synagogues burned and an estimated 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses were smashed and looted. At least 91 Jews were murdered, and many, many more—perhaps 30,000—were arrested by Hitler's special police and sent to concentration camps.

For the first time, the Nazis had begun rounding up large numbers of Jews for no reason other than their ethnicity.

Most historians now cite Kristallnacht as the beginning of the Holocaust. Although the anti-Semitic violence of Kristallnacht was widely covered in the American press at the time, it still moved few Americans to reconsider their isolationist stance.

As late as April 1939, 84% of the American people still opposed military intervention in what had come to be seen as an almost inevitable European war. A month later, 69% opposed even lending money to Britain and France to help them mount a serious fight against Hitler.

Roosevelt begged Congress to loosen its restrictions on aid to the Allies, but he was firmly rebuffed.

Fall of Poland and France

On September 1st, 1939, German tanks rolled across the border into Poland, proving Neville Chamberlain's promise of "peace for our time" to have been hopelessly naive. Though neither Britain nor France had been able to fully prepare

their armed forces to confront Adolf Hitler's ferocious military juggernaut, leaders of both nations felt they had no choice but to declare war against Germany after this latest intolerable transgression.

The war in Europe took a disastrous turn for the worse in the early summer of 1940. After many months of "phony war"—in which Britain and France were nominally at war with Germany, but the countries' armies did little actual fighting—Germany launched a full-scale blitzkrieg invasion of France on May 10th, 1940. Prepared for a repeat of First World War-style trench warfare rather than fast-moving tank combat, the French army found itself immediately overwhelmed.

The German advance moved so fast that an entire British expeditionary force of more than 200,000 men was cut off and surrounded at the French port of Dunkirk. Only a desperate naval evacuation—which included, as a last resort, the use of tiny civilian fishing boats and pleasure craft—saved the British army from capture or destruction.

Less than six weeks after the fighting began, the French government was forced to surrender. Triumphant Nazi soldiers marched down the Champs-Élysées in Paris, reveling in the total defeat of their age-old French enemies. In England, Winston Churchill took over as prime minister from the disgraced Neville Chamberlain and promised to carry on the fight against Hitler's seemingly invincible military force.

"We shall not flag or fail," Churchill proclaimed before Parliament on June 4th, 1940. "We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, and we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

Inspired by Churchill's resolve, most Americans began to sympathize with Britain, tilting against Germany in the conflict. Still, though, they had little interest in joining Churchill in the struggle directly. A month after his famous speech, a poll found that 79% of the American people would vote to "stay out of the war" if they were given a chance to participate in a referendum on the question.

In those darkest days of the Second World War, as the British people endured constant aerial bombardment and braced themselves for an expected German invasion, as the specter of a Europe totally dominated by Adolf Hitler loomed as a very real possibility, four out of five Americans wanted nothing more than to stay out of the conflict.

Roosevelt's War

Franklin D. Roosevelt, by this time, had begun devising ways to circumvent the isolationist restrictions of the Neutrality Acts in order to offer the maximum possible assistance to the British. "If my neighbor's house catches fire," the president explained to one of his advisers, "and I know that fire will spread to my house unless it is put out, and I am watering the grass in my back yard, and I don't pass my garden hose over the fence to my neighbor, I am a fool."

Immediately after the fall of France, Roosevelt took the legally-dubious measure of declaring millions of rounds of ammunition and American firearms to be "surplus" to military requirements, and thus, supposedly exempt from the ban on direct shipment to England.

Later in 1940, he worked around a congressional ban on sales of warships by agreeing to "trade" 50 aging destroyers to Britain in exchange for 99-year leases on several British naval bases in the Caribbean. Early in 1941, Roosevelt proclaimed that the defensive maritime perimeter of the "Pan-American Security Zone" extended all the way to Iceland in the North Atlantic. So, he authorized himself to dispatch American naval squadrons to defend convoys of merchant ships from German submarine attacks for nearly half the length of their journey to Britain.

The result, by the second half of 1941, was undeclared but very real and sustained naval warfare between American ships and German submarines in the Atlantic. Acting against the clear intent of Congress and, arguably, outside the law, Roosevelt had effectively if unofficially entered his reluctant country into World War II.

But his country didn't quite know it yet.

Through 1940 and 1941, A new organization arose to champion isolationism. Its

leaders were captains of industry. And its most vocal spokesman was a charismatic celebrity with no background in politics or world affairs.

The America First Committee was formed in late 1939 and quickly won the support of at least hundreds of thousands, if not indeed millions, of Americans by arguing vigorously against U.S. entry into the war.

Charles Lindbergh gave speeches where he acknowledged the atrocities being committed by Hitler against Jewish people, but he warned that there was nothing America could do. That we shouldn't get involved in European affairs.

Against this backdrop, Roosevelt hoped to inspire the nation with his speech where he outlined his vision for the world. This Four Freedoms speech was a dud.

Despite these highly public moments, however, the concept of the Four Freedoms failed to resonate on Capitol Hill, in journalistic reports, or even with the American public.

And it was not until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor – a day that will live in infamy – did the US enter World War II.

One year later, the U.S. was deeply involved in the war and Norman Rockwell—already well-known for his iconic covers for *The Saturday Evening Post*—was trying to support the war effort however he could. In the spring of 1942, while he was creating promotional posters for the U.S. Army, Rockwell came up with the idea of illustrating Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms."

There were just two big problems.

First, it was an impossibly ambitious project. How do you illustrate abstract concepts like The Freedom of Speech or Want? The scope wasn't lost on Rockwell. "It was so darned high-blown," he said. "Somehow I just couldn't get my mind around it."

The second problem was that no one would pay him to do it.

Rockwell first pitched his idea of painting the "Four Freedoms" to the Graphic Division of the War Department's Office of Facts and Figures in May 1942. They were interested, but wouldn't commit to the idea. So Rockwell created elaborate

charcoal sketches of his concepts and traveled to Washington D.C. to propose the series to the Office of War Information. They too turned him down.

On his way back home, Rockwell met with Ben Hibbs, his new editor at the *Saturday Evening Post*. Hibbs embraced the concept of the Four Freedoms and committed to running them in the magazine. He gave Rockwell two months to complete them.

It took Rockwell seven months. The tenacious project took its toll on the artist, who lost 10 pounds over the course of those seven months. Afterward, he famously said, "The job was too big for me ... It should have been tackled by Michelangelo."

The Saturday Evening Post began publishing Rockwell's "Four Freedoms" in February 1943. They ran one painting a week, starting with "Freedom of Speech" on February 20. An essay extolling the virtues of that particular freedom accompanied each painting.

THE RECEPTION OF THE FOUR FREEDOMS

The Saturday Evening Post was not prepared for the reaction to Rockwell's paintings. They immediately received over 25,000 requests for reprints of the art.

Two months later, U.S. Department of the Treasury partnered with the *Post* to use the "Four Freedoms" to sell war bonds and stamps. They printed over 4 million posters of the "Four Freedoms" and sponsored a national tour where over 1 million people came to see Rockwell's original paintings in person.

In the end, Rockwell's ambitious project raised more than \$130 million to support the Allied troops and resulted in some of the most iconic images of his long and storied career.

Chapter Four

World War II ended in May in Europe and August in Asia.

The United Nations was established on 24 October 1945 with the aim of

preventing another such conflict.

After the atrocities committed by the Germans became more well known, the consensus within the world community was that the [United Nations](#) Charter did not sufficiently define the rights to which it referred.

Using the Four Freedoms as a starting point, Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the UN committee who drafted a comprehensive Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This document stands as a testament to the highest ideals of our national spirit and has been translated into more than 508 languages.

Chapter Five

Our current government is using this document as some sort of super villain checklist of things to take away, including a departure from the United Nations Human Rights Council on the day that the High Commissioner criticized the US for unconscionable acts.

But I can celebrate this July 4 knowing that the highest and best values and ideals are things to be proud of.

Donald Trump proclaimed his inauguration day as a National Day of Patriotic Devotion. I like to think of it more as a day that will live in infamy.

But so often everything becomes clear in crisis. So let us proclaim this time a National Season of Patriotic Action.

My takeaway from this. I need to do something.

I need to have the difficult conversation. It's so challenging when everything is being thrown at you to just curl up in a ball and hope things will go away.

We are a people of action.

A final story

Norman Rockwell's granddaughter, Abigail Rockwell, shared the following thoughts:

We are living in chaotic and even alarming times, but here's the tremendous gift: We are compelled to go within — so much outside of ourselves is beyond our control — to discover what our true values are — what is really important to us, for our families and our lives. Everything becomes clear in times of crisis. All of us are now urged to revisit the Four Freedoms and what they mean to us. Freedom of Speech (and the Press) is more relevant and vital than ever before; Freedom from Want — the polarity of the haves and the have-nots is starkly apparent and pressing; Freedom of Worship as everyone's faith is being tested, judged, and at times viciously condemned; and Freedom from Fear haunts all of us as we attempt to gather greater strength, courage, and renewed purpose in the face of escalating troubles around the world.

The process of painting the Four Freedoms ushered in a new phase in my grandfather's work; a greater sense of purpose, refined technique, and heightened storytelling began to inform his art from then on.

The great studio fire that occurred shortly after he completed Four Freedoms — a blaze that destroyed his entire studio and its contents, including the collection of his own work — forced him to immediately let go of the past and start all over again in the harsh light of an inestimable artistic and personal loss. But he embraced it, moved to a less isolated home on the West Arlington town green, and became very close with his neighbors — the Edgertons and the entire community in Vermont — which also greatly benefited his work and life.

Without his seven-month struggle in painting the Four Freedoms and the subsequent studio fire, the period of Norman Rockwell's masterpieces in the late '40s to mid-'50s simply would not have occurred.

As evidenced in his Freedoms paintings, Rockwell wanted to make a difference with his art, and as a trusted and highly marketable illustrator, he had the opportunity to do so. Humor and pathos—traits that made his *Saturday Evening*

Post covers successful—were replaced by the direct, reportorial style of magazine editorials.

After ending his forty-seven year career with *The Post* in 1963, Rockwell sought new artistic challenges. His first assignment for *Look*—*The Problem We All Live With*—portrayed a six-year-old African-American girl being escorted by U.S. marshals to her first day at an all-white school in New Orleans, an assertion on moral decency. In 1965, Rockwell focused on the murder of three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi, and in 1967, he chose children, once again, to illustrate desegregation in our nation's suburbs. In an interview later in his life, Rockwell recalled that he once had to paint out an African-American person in a picture since *The Post's* policy dictated showing people of color in service industry jobs only. Freed from such restraints, Rockwell anxiously sought opportunities to correct the editorial prejudices reflected in his previous work

Benediction

We are a people of action

As we celebrate the independence of our nation on July 4, let us remember that we are part of an interdependent web of all existence.

As we live out the true meaning of patriotism, may we embrace the words of our Unitarian prophet Henry David Thoreau who said, "I am a citizen of the world first, and of this country at a later and more convenient hour."

As we go forth and fight for the freedoms that are the highest ideals of this country, may we never forget that love and compassion will always win out over hatred and self-interest.

We are a people of action.

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