



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

Thoughts About Freedom

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | JULY 6, 2020



Dear One,

In the season of the United States' Independence Day, I find myself reflecting on the meaning of freedom.

Even as a little girl I found myself confused by the words of the Star-Spangled Banner, written during the War of 1812—the “second war of independence” from the British—later becoming our national anthem and theme song of our independence and patriotism. To my young mind it was a song about war—rocket’s red glare, bombs bursting in air, men fighting a bloody battle, our flag rising above violence, death, and despair. Not beautiful. Not what I knew the glory of our country to be. But we won that war, didn’t we? We gained national sovereignty, confidence, and thirst for expansionism and opportunity.

With that hard-won freedom, the leaders and explorers of our newly independent nation went on to do many great things. They created a country in which I could explore and learn and thrive in many profound ways. A place where I’ve felt the freedom to become anything I’ve ever desired. Freedom I am deeply grateful for.

But what those early settlers of America also did—and I can't forget this—was recapitulate the personal and collective trauma of colonialism, religious and social persecution, suffering imposed on immigrants moving to an uncertain land and future, and the atrocities of war. Our ancestors' vision for independence, growth, and opportunity was realized at unimaginable cost to human lives through slavery, genocide, and widespread annihilation of others' freedoms.

That's always been a bitter pill for me to swallow. The anthem celebrating a violent insurrection leading to widespread calculated violence couched as freedom. My freedom and opportunities created from the backs and suffering of others.

I don't want to cast a shadow on the national holiday we all hold dear or on the amazing and beautiful things about our country (of which there are so many). But we've now fully arrived in the new era of truth telling, gut-wrenching self-examination, and deconstruction of the violent and oppressive aspects of our society, to create a new, more evolved, and inclusive truth. A truth that supports the real freedom of everyone. A truth that supports our healing—individually and collectively.

In that spirit, I'd like to wish you all a very happy Independence Day. Not for what was—not for the wars, the victories, or the “progress” that came at such enormous cost. But for our new and various ways forward. The ways we are carving together as we do the hard work of telling the truth—my truth, your truth, our truth. The ways that lead to our healing—healing of our bodies, our souls, our relationships, our world, and our planet.

We are truly blessed to have this ability and opportunity. We can all rise. And that's worth fighting for.

Love,

Karyn

p.s. How do we heal? We start with our stories. Read my series, [Empower Your Healing Story.](#)

KARYN SHANKS MD

Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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