

U.S. Independence Day

America's Declaration of Independence

Caroline Kennedy
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

President Barack Obama reminded us in his speech in Hiroshima in May that the story of America began with this simple idea: *All men are created equal, and endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

He recognized that staying true to these principles is never easy, but I have been inspired by the shared dedication to these ideals throughout the last year by people across our two nations.



Equality

This year marked the fifth consecutive year of the Tokyo Pride Parade and the first anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding marriage equality. Shibuya and Setagaya wards also announced their recognition of civil unions. Even though it took 240 years, Americans now recognize that the right to marry who you love is guaranteed by our Constitution.

The U.S. and Japan are also working to increase the number of girls studying science and to promote women's entrepreneurship. Internationally, we are working to empower women and girls with education and training programs such as Japan's School for All and the White House Let Girls Learn Initiative.

Life

Over the past year and a half, our nations commemorated the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. That process

of reconciliation culminated in the President's visit to Hiroshima where he was welcomed with open hearts by the Japanese people. As he joined



The Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2016 Parade took place on May 8.
TRP2016

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to lay a wreath at the cenotaph in memory of all those who lost their lives in that terrible conflict, our leaders renewed their commitment to seek a world free of nuclear weapons and reminded us that we are all part of one human family.

Liberty

Citizens of the United States and Japan should never take for granted the liberty we enjoy. It is one of the most precious gifts that we have received. The sacrifices of our parents and grandparents have made it possible for us



President Barack Obama embraces hibakusha Shigeaki Mori in Hiroshima on May 27. AP

to live in two of the greatest democracies on earth. As Japan's 18- and 19-year-olds vote for the first time next weekend, and Americans prepare to vote for a new president in November, we are reminded of this sacred birthright. Our two nations have never been closer and our love of liberty is one of the most vital qualities that we share.

Pursuit of happiness

In 1776, Americans declared that each person has the right to live their dream. Since then millions of people have come to the U.S. seeking a better life. Others have come to study and have returned home ready to change the world. Last year, the U.S. welcomed over 19,000 Japanese students, but we want so many more! Please visit and work to bring our two great countries even closer.

*Congratulations to the American People
on Their Independence Day*



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