

Dear America,

As we approach your 250th birthday, I am reflecting on the ideals upon which this country was founded – the concept that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are unalienable human rights. America’s semi-quincentennial is a much-needed opportunity to pause and look back and ensure we are living up to this promise our founding fathers made.

Here in Greater Rochester, we have witnessed the best of each of these ideas throughout our history. We have seen the development of a real community uniting around a common goal as one of the nation’s first boomtowns. We have seen Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony fight for and champion efforts to advance civil liberties for marginalized groups. And, we have seen the development of new technologies that have played a critical role in advancing the world’s ability to document both historic moments and everyday ‘Kodak moments’ alike.

We are proud to celebrate all of these accomplishments. But more importantly, we are proud to not just continue operating with these beliefs, but advance others outlined in the Declaration of Independence as key pillars of our community. We are working hard today, alongside so many other regions throughout the nation, to ensure that *all* members of our community are experiencing the equality and liberty that have been promised to them.

From supporting minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBs) in our region to confronting inequitable development in our region and investing in workforce development efforts to break cycles of poverty and build economic mobility, we are proud to convene and lead conversations that ensure that “all men are created equal” is not just a phrase – but a lived reality for all.

During a time when we are experiencing unprecedented levels of division and political polarization, I urge our community to take this moment to look inward. To take a moment reflect on the progress that has been made, and more importantly, the work that is yet to be done. I am proud to be an American, and am proud to continue the tireless fight for a better future.

Here’s to the next 250,



Robert J. Duffy
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