



Dear America,

Happy 250th Birthday.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, a bold idea was born — that freedom, opportunity, and self-determination belonged not just to the few, but to everyone willing to work for them and protect them. As we celebrate this incredible milestone, I find myself reflecting on my own journey and how deeply this country has shaped my life.

My story began in Brooklyn, in the neighborhood of Canarsie, where I spent my earliest years learning about community, hard work, and pride in where you come from. From there, my family moved to Long Island, where I grew up in Oceanside and later Old Bethpage. Each place added another chapter to my story and provided opportunities that helped shape the person I would become.

As a child, one of my favorite subjects in school was history—especially American history. I was fascinated by the stories of our nation's founding, the people who fought for independence, and the generations who continued to defend and improve the country that was handed to them. I loved learning not only about the victories, but also about the challenges that tested us and ultimately made us stronger.

Growing up in New York gave me a unique appreciation for many of America's most recognizable symbols of freedom and opportunity. Few sights inspire hope quite like the Statue of Liberty standing proudly in New York Harbor, welcoming generations of immigrants and dreamers seeking a better life. I loved visiting Central Park, one of the world's great public spaces, where people from every background could gather and enjoy the beauty of the city together. Working in New York City often included visits to monuments and memorials that told the story of our nation and reminded me that history was not something confined to textbooks—it was alive all around us.

Later, life brought me south to Wilmington North Carolina, where I found new opportunities and built the next chapter of my American story. This move reinforced one of the greatest gifts this country provides: the freedom to pursue your dreams wherever opportunity leads you.

America's beauty extends far beyond its cities. Our national parks stand as some of our greatest treasures, preserving mountains, forests, deserts, coastlines, and wildlife for future generations. These protected lands represent more than conservation—they symbolize our belief that the wonders of this country belong to all of us and should remain accessible for generations yet to come. They remind us that freedom includes the ability to explore, discover, and experience the incredible diversity of the land we call home.

One of the opportunities I am most grateful for has been the ability to become a business owner and entrepreneur. Over the past twelve years of owning Five Tropical Smoothie Cafe locations throughout New Hanover County and Brunswick County, I have experienced

firsthand the power of the American dream. What began as a business opportunity became something much larger—the opportunity to create jobs, mentor leaders, and provide employment to thousands of people over the years. Watching young employees gain confidence, develop skills, and move on to pursue their own dreams has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

None of these opportunities would have been possible without the countless Americans who sacrificed so much to preserve the freedoms we enjoy today.

To the men and women who served—and continue to serve—in our nation's military, thank you. Thank you to those who left their families behind, who stood watch in dangerous places, and who made sacrifices that many of us will never fully understand. Thank you to those who gave their lives so future generations could continue to live in freedom. Your courage and service are the foundation upon which our opportunities are built.

As America celebrates 250 years, I am filled with gratitude for what we have inherited and hopeful for what lies ahead. Freedom is not something we can take for granted. It must be appreciated, protected, and passed on.

One of the greatest responsibilities I have is to teach my children to love this country—not because it is perfect, but because it is worth preserving and improving. I want them to understand the sacrifices that were made for their freedoms and the responsibility they have to carry those values forward. My hope is that they, and generations after them, will continue to build upon the ideals that began in 1776 and ensure that the promise of America remains strong for another 250 years and beyond.

Happy Birthday, America.

Thank you for the opportunities, the freedoms, the memories, and the dreams still waiting to be pursued.

May God continue to bless the United States of America.

Sincerely,

A grateful American

Brandon Korman

Owner

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