

## **VOICES: As a Buddhist, what does Independence Day mean to you?**

*Members from Las Vegas Territory respond:*

Independence Day represents the determination of the people who never gave up on their right to choose, who paved the way for us to have the liberty to practice Buddhism as a religion today.

— JENNIFER PORRAS, Las Vegas

True independence is found in following the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and propagating them.

— JOHN BROWN, Las Vegas

Independence Day has a lot to do with casting off the transient and revealing the true. In its formative period, the United States comprised a lot of conflicting elements. But through our ability to pursue our religious ideals, I feel the last 200 years have seen more spiritual evolution than the previous 2,000.

— STEWART SAINT-DAVID, Las Vegas

Being in the military, it meant how much you had to earn freedom. But as a Buddhist, I've learned that peace is required for freedom. Looking at the surface is wrong. You have to look to the heart of people to see that peace is required for freedom.

— STEVE SCHULKINS, Las Vegas

I feel fortunate to live in a country where we can practice freely. For me, I really think the SGI will eventually bring out the true spirit of Independence Day through each person's practice for world peace.

— JOHN PAYTON, Las Vegas

Even though I was born in Japan, I feel patriotic about it because Americans stood up and fought for their beliefs. Just like [first and second Soka Gakkai presidents] Makiguchi and Toda.

— YURIE SHARP, Las Vegas

Independence Day will occur when all mankind awakens to the reality that to be truly free is to love a peaceful existence.

— JEFF KILIAN, Las Vegas

As a Buddhist, true independence is the freedom to live in a society where everyone is treated fairly, equally and with respect.

— SANDRAJONES, Las Vegas