
COMMENTARY

Commentary on Keith Tudor's (2018) 'In(ter)dependence Day'

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This commentary is based on Keith's article, 'In(ter)dependence Day: Lives mattering, freedom with responsibility, and social well-being', published originally in 2018, which can be found here: <https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international/article/view/547>.

For over 10 years, Keith Tudor has been a leader of *Psychotherapy and Politics International (PPI)*, not only serving as its editor, but also providing engaging analysis and advocacy as an author. This commentary provides a look at his critique of the American Declaration of Independence (Tudor, 2018) that used a catchy rephrasing of the July 4th holiday known as Independence Day. In addition to summarizing the article, this commentary provides a perspective on the themes and style that Tudor employs and concludes with a discussion of a new national holiday that provides a (partial) counterpoint to Independence Day.

The coverup from national holidays

Tudor's (2018) introduction highlights the genocide of Native Americans and slavery of African Americans on which the USA was founded. He draws a comparison between Independence Day and Thanksgiving Day (the fourth Thursday of November). Many groups of people were not independent with rights to life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness when the USA was declared independent, and many people were not thankful for having their land taken and being controlled and killed by colonizers. Tudor reveals for his readers, what many may have suspected or known, but often do not want to pay attention to: Many national holidays celebrate only a relatively recent event and an ideal from a specific perspective that often denies other perspectives in its establishment and practice. Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, and similar holidays throughout the world might aptly each be named by

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first peoples as an 'Invasion Day'. His introduction lands on the purpose of the article, to point to the 'fundamental individualism inherent in the framing of the Declaration of Independence' and articulate 'perspectives that support interdependence' (pp. 2–3).

Interdependent alternatives to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

Tudor (2018) contrasts an emphasis on the value of the common good with the autonomy of the self. Among other points, he discusses the Second Amendment to the US Constitution: a right usually interpreted as an individual right to have and shoot guns. Ironically, the more this right to life is employed, the less life is actually achieved. According to the BBC (2023), as of the writing of this commentary on April 16, 2023, there have been at least 160 mass shootings in the USA so far in 2023, a trend that follows the pattern of the last 3 years in which approximately two mass shootings happen each day in the USA. About 50 people a day die from gun violence in the USA, over half of which are death by suicide. The Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health (2023) presents a summary of findings with references on firearms and death (the opposite of the right to life), showing where there are more guns in homes, cities, states, and countries, there is more homicide and suicide. Tudor concludes this first section referencing ideas that challenges individualism and/or balances the interests of self and others, such as connectedness, belonging, mutual recognition, and social actualization, each with appropriate references. Connectedness, belonging, and mutuality are often healing factors in psychotherapy even if psychotherapy is usually viewed to have its primary purpose as the remediation of individual symptoms and disorders.

Tudor (2018) continues with an alternative to American liberty, a notion of freedom with responsibility, not an individualistic concept of freedom *to*, but a freedom *for* and *with* others. He advocates for inclusion of notions that are in contrast to typical psychotherapy concerns:

- oversight, not just insight;
- action, not just adaptation;
- healing, not just cure; and
- social actualization, not just self-actualization.

Tudor (2018) also advocates for social well-being as an alternative to individual happiness. Individual happiness is often linked towards personal safety, such as the in the US Constitution and Second Amendment, and linked towards materialism, especially possessing goods and using services. In contrast, Tudor elucidates alternatives with three meanings of two Greek words (i.e., hedonia and eudaimonia), summarized in English as emotional well-being (or pleasure), psychological well-being (or flow and immediacy in context), and social well-being (affiliation, belonging, and social good). Before concluding with further ideas on interdependence, Tudor posits the importance of group work as a default setting rather than individual work. It does make one wonder if group therapy were 95%, instead of 5%, of

psychotherapy treatment (Pappas, 2023), how much more social well-being might be emphasized, not just by us as psychotherapists and counselors, but by all peoples?

Quintessentially Tudor

The themes in 'In(ter)dependence Day' ring backward and forward to the rest of Tudor's work, not unlike the liberty bell that American abolitionists adopted as a symbol. For example, from early in his tenure with *PPI*, Tudor (2012) proposed four counterpoints to European-American psychotherapies drawn from Southern psychotherapies. These were:

1. Focus on the specific and the context over generalities and universalities;
2. Read the center from the periphery, that is begin with a pluralistic perspective, honoring marginalized perspectives of the mainstream;
3. Include ideas from the periphery, such as mind–body concepts rather than mind–body splits, and client conceptualizations; and
4. Reverse the grand erasure of the experience of oppressed peoples, by reclaiming and reintegrating that which has been hidden, both in each client and collectively. This may include the experience of colonization and how it has affected all peoples, and the need to acknowledge, make amends, repair, repent, seek forgiveness, and offer reparations.

I expect each reader can hear a clear resonance of these ideas of with those in 'In(ter)dependence Day'. In a new work published online, Tudor and Rogers (2023) deconstruct psychotherapy put forth in the classic question, 'How can I be of help?' In turn, looking at the implications in each word, they repropose the question as, 'Can we be of help?' They (a) problematize the privileging of the 'I' of the helper, (b) challenge the assumption of help with an attitude of service and possibility, and (c) put the relationship and the other first.

To me, there is a call throughout Keith's work for cultural and personal humility given the intrinsic importance of other people. There is also a level-headedness, a concern to look at fundamental questions first, not in a strident way, but also not shying away from naming what needs to be named. I have loved 'listening' to Keith as I expect to be surprised, surprised by something I knew but was drawn to forget, should have seen but did not see, or saw but could not so unflinchingly name.

A (not so) new holiday

In 2021, Juneteenth National Independence Day finally became a national holiday in the USA even though it had been celebrated by many for 156 years (Juneteenth, 2023; Juneteenth.com, n.d.). Juneteenth has been considered the second independence day, Black

independence day, and a multicultural holiday, even if it remains little known to much of the world, or even to many in the USA. Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of a quarter of a million enslaved African Americans in Texas on June 19, 1865, according to the posting of General Order No. 3. However, this was not the first or the last date in which slavery was outlawed in the USA. General Order No. 3 came after the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation occurred on September 22, 1962, and the final Emancipation Proclamation came on January 1, 1963, which declared persons free in Confederate States. Likewise, it was not until the ratification of the 13th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States on December 6, 1965 that most forms of slavery were outlawed in all of the USA, not just in Confederate States. Today, slavery is still allowed in the USA according to the 13th Amendment as a punishment for crime, a reality cuttingly revealed in the film *13th* (DuVernay, 2016). I wonder when or if slavery will become fully illegal in the USA, and for that matter everywhere.

Undoubtedly, Juneteenth will help reduce the collective amnesia that I, as a White American male, and others are tempted towards, whether in American individualistic society or around the world (International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, 2021). How much so is an open question. I only hope that we will each find our own way to surprise ourselves and others with the humility I have been encouraged to by Keith. I hope this humility leads to revelations for perspectives we should remember, perspectives we can see when we seek them, and perspectives we must maintain in our awareness and advocacy.

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