

## July 4: A Long History of Protest in the United States

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— Categories: Human Rights



Every year on July 4, Americans gather to celebrate their independence. Fireworks light up the skies, flags wave proudly, and patriotic songs fill the air. But beyond the parades and picnics, this day has also been a stage for another powerful tradition: protest.

For more than 250 years, people in the United States have used Independence Day not only to honor freedom but to demand that it be extended to everyone. This idea comes to life in episode 55 of *Stories of Resistance*, a podcast co-produced by The Real News and Global

Exchange. Through independent investigative journalism, the series sheds light on the countless ways ordinary citizens have stood up against injustice.

One of the most famous examples of July 4 resistance came in 1852 when abolitionist Frederick Douglass delivered a speech that still echoes today. Speaking to an audience in Rochester, New York, Douglass asked a searing question: “What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?” His words laid bare the hypocrisy of celebrating liberty in a nation that still held millions in bondage.

Decades later, the struggle for equality continued as women suffragists took to the streets. On July 4, 1876, members of the National Woman Suffrage Association boldly interrupted the official centennial celebration in Philadelphia. They presented their “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States,” demanding the right to vote and to be recognized as full citizens.

The tradition of the July 4 protest carried on into the civil rights era. Activists used the holiday to highlight racial segregation and discrimination. Public demonstrations on Independence Day became powerful reminders that the promise of freedom was still incomplete for many Americans.

In 1973, farm workers led by César Chávez and the United Farm Workers marked July 4 with a historic 1,000-mile march. Their journey was a testament to the dignity of labor and the demand for better working conditions.

Each of these moments reflects a simple truth: Independence Day has always been more than fireworks. It is also a time when people have gathered to speak out, march, and insist that America live up to its founding ideals.

Stories of Resistance bring these stories to life, offering inspiration for those who continue to fight for justice today. As the podcast reminds us, July 4 can be a day to celebrate freedom and call for a more just and equal society for all.