

Happy Birthday, America!

January 10, 2018

What? Oh, sure, I know the United States of America has its birthday on July 4th, that day in 1776 when the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence.



Let's agree I'm early. (Oh, how I wish it were July.)

But the interesting thing about history is how we get to those moments wherein the great "we" declare our independence or fill the streets or storm the beaches — or the polls. The many big, important days that lead to THE day.

Today is such a date, because 242 years ago on January 10, 1776, Thomas Paine published

“Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression,” Paine told his fellow Americans. “Freedom hath been hunted round the globe.”

Common Sense. Without this day 242 years ago, we wouldn't have had Independence Day six months later.

Using common and direct language, and speaking to all the “inhabitants of

America,” *Common Sense* made the case for both independence from Britain and the establishment of a democratic republic. Boy, did it make the case. On a per capita basis, Paine's pamphlet is the bestselling American publication in history.

His pamphlet or parts were read publicly, reprinted in newspapers and spread throughout the colonies. This common man — barely an American,* having landed on our shores in November 1774 — used the universal language, speaking truth to power.

“Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression,” Paine told his fellow Americans. “Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.”

The original idea of these United States was freedom.

And that, my friends, is *Common Sense*. (I'm Paul Jacob.)

** Of course, this makes Paine almost quintessentially American.*