

Through the lens of history, the progress of the past five decades may seem inevitable. We may wish to remember our triumphs while erasing the pain and doubt that came before. Yet to do so would be a disservice to the giants who led us to the mountaintop, to unsung heroes who left footprints on our National Mall, to every American who bled and died on the battlefield of justice. In the face of bigotry, fear, and unyielding opposition from entrenched interests, their courage stirred our Nation's conscience. And their struggle helped convince a Texas Democrat who had previously voted against civil rights legislation to become its new champion. With skillful charm and ceaseless grit, President Lyndon B. Johnson shepherded the Civil Rights Act through the Congress—and on July 2, 1964, he signed it into law.

While laws alone cannot right every wrong, they possess an unmatched power to anchor lasting change. The Civil Rights Act threw open the door for legislation that strengthened voting rights and established fair housing standards for all Americans. Fifty years later, we know our country works best when we accept our obligations to one another, embrace the belief that our destiny is shared, and draw strength from the bonds that hold together the most diverse Nation on Earth.

As we reflect on the Civil Rights Act and the burst of progress that followed, we also acknowledge that our journey is not complete. Today, let us resolve to restore the promise of opportunity, defend our fellow Americans' sacred right to vote, seek equality in our schools and workplaces, and fight injustice wherever it exists. Let us remember that victory never comes easily, but with iron wills and common purpose, those who love their country can change it.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim July 2, 2014, as the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with programs, ceremonies, and activities that celebrate this accomplishment and advance civil rights in our time.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of June, in the year of our Lord two thousand fourteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-eighth.

BARACK OBAMA

Proclamation 9147 of July 18, 2014

Captive Nations Week, 2014

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

As the grip of the Cold War tightened, America pledged our solidarity to every nation held captive behind the Iron Curtain and every individual who refused to accept that fate. We stood with them through a long twilight struggle until—from Europe to South America to Southeast Asia—democracy took root, a wall tumbled down, and people who had known only

the blinders of fear began to taste the blessings of freedom. During Captive Nations Week, we celebrate this progress and stand with all who still seek to throw off their oppressors and embrace a brighter day.

In recent years, convulsions in the Middle East and North Africa have laid bare deep divisions within societies. Dictators have answered peaceful movements with brutality. Extremists have tried to hijack change, seeking to replace one form of tyranny with another. And around the world, authoritarian regimes continue to deprive men, women, and children of their most basic human rights.

America extends our support to all peoples seeking to build true democracy, real prosperity, and lasting security. While the road to self-determination is long and treacherous, history proves it is passable. This week, as we carry forward that age-old struggle—of liberty against oppression, of unity against intolerance—let us once again demonstrate the enduring strength of our ideals.

The Congress, by joint resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week of July of each year as “Captive Nations Week.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 20 through July 26, 2014, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to reaffirm our deep ties to all governments and people committed to freedom, dignity, and opportunity for all.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand fourteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-ninth.

BARACK OBAMA

Proclamation 9148 of July 25, 2014

Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 2014

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Over two decades ago, Americans—some in wheelchairs, some using sign language, and all with an abiding belief in our Nation’s promise—came together to strengthen our commitment to equality for all. At a time when people with disabilities were turned away at movie theaters, rejected for employment, and measured by what so many thought they could not do, leaders and activists refused to accept the world as it was. In small towns and big cities, they spoke out. They staged sit-ins, authored discrimination diaries, and scaled the Capitol steps. Finally, they realized their call for simple justice in one of the most comprehensive civil rights bills in our country’s history. On the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we honor those who fought against discrimination, and we recommit to tearing down barriers and guaranteeing all Americans the right to pursue their own measure of happiness.