

Remarks by Gary T. Johnson, President, Chicago History Museum,

at the celebration of Independence Day, July 4, 2011

(following the reading of the Declaration of Independence)

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and *the pursuit of happiness*. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness....”

Every year, it seems, there is a phrase in the Declaration that takes on a special meaning because of what’s happening around us. This year, what strikes me is “*the pursuit of happiness*.” Think of it, “*all*” have an “*unalienable right*” to “*the pursuit of happiness*.” In the context of the Chicago History Museum’s “Out in Chicago” exhibition, this right has special resonance, but as you will see when you visit our exhibition, not only the pursuit of happiness, but also *life* and *liberty*, have been the subjects of continuing struggles.

In an era when we worry about a lack of knowledge about history, we all can learn by brushing up on the promises of the Declaration of Independence and studying the unfolding of those promises over more than 2-1/4 centuries.

Thank you.