Frieda Jaffe: Let us celebrate our freedom

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Yes, I admit to being sentimental, and when it comes to how I feel about my adopted country, America, I am fiercely patriotic. Not because we can do no wrong; not because of the constant and noisy and at times crazy politics that come close to dividing us along "party" lines; and certainly not because everything is always "good" and "right" when it comes to matters of religion, ethnicity, civil rights, government decisions with respect to our relationships with other countries and other governments, and so many other issues that concern us all.

And yet — and yet — it is precisely because of all of the above that I am so fiercely and unashamedly patriotic, and so proud to be a citizen of this unique country. My husband Harold and I attended a pre-Fourth of July concert on July 1 at Florida Atlantic University. It was aptly entitled "The Spirit of America". Though we attend most "honor America" functions and celebrations, this concert made me acutely aware of the wondrous diversity of our people, our origins and most especially our music. And music unites us in our "Americanism" more than any other form of expression.

It is ironic that so much of our "American" music is rooted in our multi-ethnic make-up and super ironic that much of this music was created and performed by Jewish genius. I do not believe in coincidence, and so have to believe that this blending of our own Jewish history, our countries of origin, our cultural background — all have created a love and appreciation of music — of words and sounds that encompass us, the people of this country we call America.

Though Jews come from many countries and many cultures, have different customs and lifestyles, one thing unites us, our souls. So, if we are so different, so separate, so diverse — and yes, let's admit it — so argumentative and at times so very righteous about who we are, what we believe in and what is best for everyone, then what makes me so strongly patriotic and proud to be counted as a staunch American?

Because, I, the individual — the person that I am — can become who or what I want to be, if I believe in myself and am willing to sacrifice and work and then work some more. Isn't that what all our immigrant relatives believed? That, my friends, is what America represents for me and is what I have passed on to my children.

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