



"Patriotism to me isn't blindly following the bellwether of the most powerful political trend. ... Patriotism IS the unrelenting need to challenge the forces that seek to undermine all that our Forefathers created."

Charles Rice,
Gay Santa Barbara.org



One nation, many voices

By Leslie Dinaberg
Edee Olson photos

Patriotism, defined simply by Merriam-Webster as "love for or devotion to one's country" has become anything but simple in our recent political climate. Throughout our nation's history, radicals, reformers, as well as those in the middle of the political road, have viewed their actions as profoundly patriotic. What better time to reflect on its meaning than this week, as we celebrate Independence Day. Here is what some South Coast residents had to say when asked, "What does patriotism mean to you?"

"Patriotism is the love of a nation that protects our freedom and human rights." -- Jane and George Arakelian, Jerusalem natives, Santa Barbara residents

"Patriotism ... means believing that my country and the freedom it gives each individual to make the most of himself, is a unique and precious treasure that is not found anywhere else in the world." -- Sandee Beckers, community volunteer

"Pride in being an American — no hyphens in front or back of that. Joy in seeing the glorious American flag with its brilliant stars and stripes while visiting foreign nations. Love of our magnificent natural resources. Enjoying the friendship that is so typical of Americans." -- Jean Blois, Goleta city councilwoman



"Patriotism is also not about waving the flag. ... It is found in the responsibility we take in our daily lives to build the community we call America. Patriotism is about being well informed about what is going on in the world ... being registered to vote and voting ... offering constructive and civil praise and criticism to our government and being free to do so; and, it is about believing and supporting our rights granted under the Constitution."
Marty Blum, Santa Barbara mayor

"... For me, patriotism means being 'always ready' to answer the call (whatever the mission may be) and to be an active and positive member of my local community." -- Lt. Bryan Clampitt, Coast Guard, Channel Islands Harbor

"I'll give you two quotes (from other people). Patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels. Peace is patriotic." -- Mickey Flacks, community activist

"It's really too bad that patriotism has become identified with a particular conservative political ideological position and that isn't true about the history of American patriotic expression. People's commitment to America is not to be measured by whether they wrap themselves in flags, but what they do to make the country as good as it wants to be, and preserve its values."-- Richard Flacks, UCSB professor

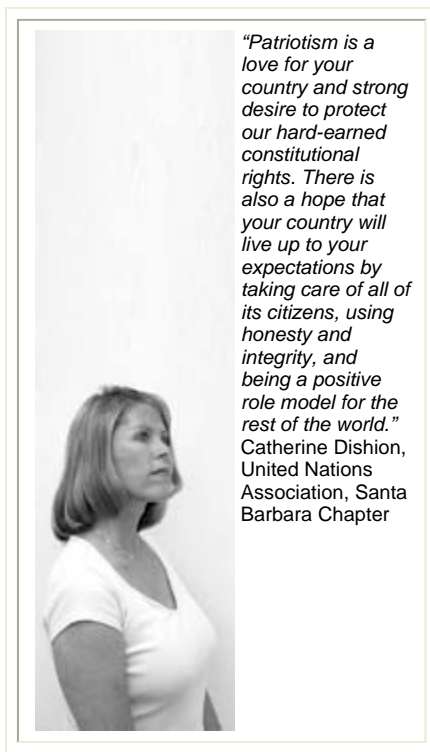
"Patriotism means standing up for individual rights and limited government. For liberty to prevail, we must be forever on guard against every form of tyranny."-- Gregory Gandrud, Carpinteria city councilman

"I feel patriotism means standing behind our service men and women that defend our country every day, no matter what our political views are." -- Lola Georgi, wife of Col. Daniel Georgi

"... Being patriotic is a little bit like being married. You love your spouse and more often than not feel like they are the absolute perfect fit for you. Occasionally, you may disagree on various issues, but it doesn't mean that you stop loving and supporting them. And when the chips are down, boy, you had better be there, defending them with all your heart."-- Ashley Snyder, mother of three

"Patriotism is an addictive escape that is self-servingly pawned off on the public by corporations and governments in order to wrest freedom from individuals and prevent us from facing and overcoming our fears." -- Justin Weaver, concert manager

"Patriotism is where a person does everything they can to help all people find happiness."-- Tobias Larouche, salesman



"Patriotism is about defending our way of life, our values, and remembering those who sacrificed their lives defending our freedoms. ... I like to remember the thousands of Native American men and women who have sacrificed and served in the U.S. military — from the Revolutionary War right up through the war in Iraq — so that all of us who live on this land may be free. — Jon Gregory, general manager, Chumash Casino

"Patriotism for me is the act of celebrating those who vehemently disagree with me and recognizing that our debate, and the fundamental right to disagree, is what unites us as a country."-- Ben Romo, political consultant, Romo & Associates

"... Pride of country, love of family and children, respect for differences of cultures and more, basking and relaxing in the beauty of our local community and most important, getting teary-eyed each time we sing 'God Bless America' and watch our flag march by!"-- Catherine Lee, executive director, Montecito Association

"Patriotism is being proud of your country."-- Marley Taylor, Girl Scout cadet, age 12