United States Declaration of Independence

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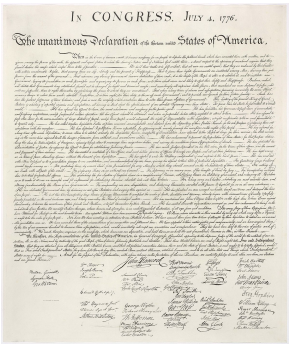
 1823 facsimile of the engrossed copy	
Created	June–July 1776
Ratified	July 4, 1776
Location	Engrossed copy: National Archives Rough draft: Library of Congress
Authors	Thomas Jefferson *et al.*
Signatories	56 delegates to the Continental Congress
Purpose	To announce and explain separation from Great Britain[1]

The **Declaration of Independence** was a statement adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, which announced that the thirteen American colonies then at war with Great Britain regarded themselves as independent states, and no longer a part of the British Empire. John Adams put forth a resolution earlier in the year which made a formal declaration inevitable. A committee was assembled to draft the formal declaration, which was to be ready when congress voted on independence. Adams persuaded the committee to select Thomas Jefferson to compose the original draft of the document,[2] which congress would edit to produce the final version. The Declaration was ultimately a formal explanation of why Congress had voted on July 2 to declare independence from Great Britain, more than a year after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War. The birthday of the United States of America—Independence Day—is celebrated on July 4, the day the wording of the Declaration was approved by Congress.

After finalizing the text on July 4, Congress issued the Declaration of Independence in several forms. It was initially published as a printed broadside that was widely distributed and read to the public. The most famous version of the Declaration, a signed copy that is usually regarded as *the* Declaration of Independence, is on display at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Although the wording of the Declaration was approved on July 4, the date of its signing has been disputed. Most historians have concluded that it was signed nearly a month after its adoption, on August 2, 1776, and not on July 4 as is commonly believed. The original July 4 United States Declaration of Independence manuscript was lost while all other copies have been derived from this original document.[3]

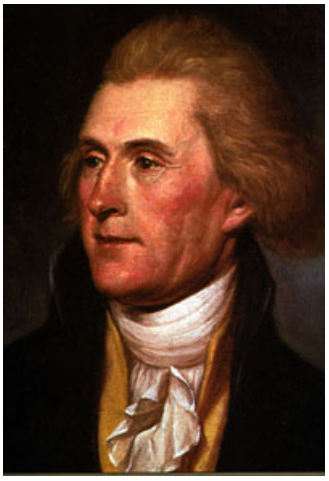
The sources and interpretation of the Declaration have been the subject of much scholarly inquiry. The Declaration justified the independence of the United States by listing colonial grievances against King George III, and by asserting certain natural and legal rights, including a right of revolution. Having served its original purpose in announcing independence, the text of the Declaration was initially ignored after the American Revolution. Its stature grew over the years, particularly the second sentence, a sweeping statement of human rights:

> 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.

This sentence has been called "one of the best-known sentences in the English language"[4] and "the most potent and consequential words in American history".[5] The passage has often been used to promote the rights of marginalized people throughout the world, and came to represent a moral standard for which the United States should strive. This view was notably promoted by Abraham Lincoln, who considered the Declaration to be the foundation of his political philosophy, and argued that the Declaration is a statement of principles through which the United States Constitution should be interpreted.[6]

Background

> *Believe me, dear Sir: there is not in the British empire a man who more cordially loves a union with Great Britain than I do. But, by the God that made me, I will cease to exist before I yield to a connection on such terms as the British Parliament propose; and in this, I think I speak the sentiments of America.*
>
> —Thomas Jefferson, November 29, 1775[7]



Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration

By the time the Declaration of Independence was adopted in July 1776, the Thirteen Colonies and Great Britain had been at war for more than a year. Relations between the colonies and the mother country had been deteriorating since the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763. The war had plunged the British government deep into debt, and so Parliament enacted a series of measures to increase tax revenue from the colonies. Parliament believed that these acts, such as the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Townshend Acts of 1767, were a legitimate means of having the colonies pay their fair share of the costs to keep the colonies in the British Empire.[8]

Many colonists, however, had developed a different conception of the empire. Because the colonies were not directly represented in Parliament, colonists argued that Parliament had no right to levy taxes upon them. This tax dispute was part of a larger divergence between British and American interpretations of the British Constitution and the extent of Parliament's authority in the colonies.[9] The orthodox British view, dating from the Glorious Revolution of 1688, was that Parliament was the supreme authority throughout the empire, and so by definition anything Parliament did was constitutional.[10] In the colonies, however, the idea had developed that the British Constitution recognized certain fundamental rights that no government—not even Parliament—could violate.[11] After the Townshend Acts, some essayists even began to question whether Parliament had any legitimate jurisdiction in the colonies at all.[12] Anticipating the arrangement of the British Commonwealth,[13] by 1774 American writers such as Samuel Adams, James Wilson, and Thomas Jefferson were arguing that Parliament was the legislature of Great Britain only, and that the colonies, which had their own legislatures, were connected to the rest of the empire only through their allegiance to the Crown.[14]

Congress convenes

The issue of Parliament's authority in the colonies became a crisis after Parliament passed the Coercive Acts in 1774 to punish the Province of Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party of 1773. Many colonists saw the Coercive Acts as a violation of the British Constitution and thus a threat to the liberties of all of British America. In September 1774, the First Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia to coordinate a response. Congress organized a boycott of British goods and petitioned the king for repeal of the acts. These measures were unsuccessful because King George III and the ministry of Prime Minister Lord North were determined not to retreat on the question of parliamentary supremacy. As the king wrote to North in November 1774, "blows must decide whether they are to be subject to this country or independent".[15]

Even after fighting in the American Revolutionary War began at Lexington and Concord in April 1775, most colonists still hoped for reconciliation with Great Britain.[16] When the Second Continental Congress convened at the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia in May 1775, some delegates hoped for eventual independence, but no one yet advocated declaring it.[17] Although many colonists no longer believed that Parliament had any sovereignty over them, they still professed loyalty to King George, who they hoped would intercede on their behalf. They were to be disappointed: in late 1775, the king rejected Congress's second petition, issued a Proclamation of Rebellion, and announced before Parliament on October 26 that he was even considering "friendly offers of foreign assistance" to suppress the rebellion.[18] A pro-American minority in Parliament warned that the government was driving the colonists toward independence.[19]

Toward independence

In January 1776, just as it became clear in the colonies that the king was not inclined to act as a conciliator, Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* was published.[20] Paine, who had only recently arrived in the colonies from England, argued in favor of colonial independence, advocating republicanism as an alternative to monarchy and hereditary rule.[21] *Common Sense* introduced no new ideas,[22] and probably had little direct effect on Congress's thinking about independence; its importance was in stimulating public debate on a topic that few had previously dared to openly discuss.[23] Public support for separation from Great Britain steadily increased after the publication of Paine's enormously popular pamphlet.[24]

The Assembly Room in Philadelphia's Independence Hall, where the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence

Although some colonists still held out hope for reconciliation, developments in early 1776 further strengthened public support for independence. In February 1776, colonists learned of Parliament's passage of the Prohibitory Act, which established a blockade of American ports and declared American ships to be enemy vessels. John Adams, a strong supporter of independence, believed that Parliament had effectively declared American independence before Congress had been able to. Adams labeled the Prohibitory Act the "Act of Independency", calling it "a compleat Dismemberment of the British Empire".[25] Support for declaring independence grew even more when it was confirmed that King George had hired German mercenaries to use against his American subjects.[26]

Despite this growing popular support for independence, Congress lacked the clear authority to declare it. Delegates had been elected to Congress by thirteen different governments—which included extralegal conventions, ad hoc committees, and elected assemblies—and were bound by the instructions given to them. Regardless of their personal opinions, delegates could not vote to declare independence unless their instructions permitted such an action.[27] Several colonies, in fact, expressly prohibited their delegates from taking any steps towards separation from Great Britain, while other delegations had instructions that were ambiguous on the issue.[28] As public sentiment for separation from Great Britain grew, advocates of independence sought to have the Congressional instructions revised. For Congress to declare independence, a majority of delegations would need authorization to vote for independence, and at least one colonial government would need to specifically instruct (or grant permission for) its delegation to propose a declaration of independence in Congress. Between April and July 1776, a "complex political war"[29] was waged to bring this about.[30]

Revising instructions

In the campaign to revise Congressional instructions, many Americans formally expressed their support for separation from Great Britain in what were effectively state and local declarations of independence. Historian Pauline Maier identified more than ninety such declarations that were issued throughout the Thirteen Colonies from April to July 1776.[31] These "declarations" took a variety of forms. Some were formal, written instructions for Congressional delegations, such as the Halifax Resolves of April 12, with which North Carolina became the first colony to explicitly authorize its delegates to vote for independence.[32] Others were legislative acts that officially ended British rule in individual colonies, such as on May 4, when the Rhode Island legislature became the first to declare its independence from Great Britain.[33] Many "declarations" were resolutions adopted at town or county meetings that offered support for independence. A few came in the form of jury instructions, such as the statement issued on April 23, 1776, by Chief Justice William Henry Drayton of South Carolina: "the law of the land authorizes me to declare...that *George* the Third, King of *Great Britain*...has no authority over us, and we owe no obedience to him."[34] Most of these declarations are now obscure, having been overshadowed by the declaration approved by Congress on July 4.[35]

Some colonies held back from endorsing independence. Resistance was centered in the middle colonies of New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.[36] Advocates of independence saw Pennsylvania as the key: if that colony could be converted to the pro-independence cause, it was believed that the others would follow.[36] On May 1, however, opponents of independence retained control of the Pennsylvania Assembly in a special election that had focused on the question of independence.[37] In response, on May 10 Congress passed a resolution, which had been promoted by John Adams and Richard Henry Lee, calling on colonies without a "government sufficient to the exigencies of their affairs" to adopt new governments.[38] The resolution passed unanimously, and was even supported by Pennsylvania's John Dickinson, the leader of the anti-independence faction in Congress, who believed that it did not apply to his colony.[39]

May 15 preamble

> *This Day the Congress has passed the most important Resolution, that ever was taken in America.*
>
> John Adams, May 15, 1776[40]

As was the custom, Congress appointed a committee to draft a preamble that would explain the purpose of the resolution. John Adams wrote the preamble, which stated that because King George had rejected reconciliation and was even hiring foreign mercenaries to use against the colonies, "it is necessary that the exercise of every kind of authority under the said crown should be totally suppressed".[41] Everyone understood that Adams's preamble was meant to encourage the overthrow of the governments of Pennsylvania and Maryland, which were still under proprietary governance.[42] Congress passed the preamble on May 15 after several days of debate, but four of the middle colonies voted against it, and the Maryland delegation walked out in protest.[43] Adams regarded his May 15 preamble as effectively an American declaration of independence, although he knew that a formal declaration would still have to be made.[44]

Lee's resolution and the final push

On the same day that Congress passed Adams's radical preamble, the Virginia Convention set the stage for a formal Congressional declaration of independence. On May 15, the Convention instructed Virginia's congressional delegation "to propose to that respectable body to declare the United Colonies free and independent States, absolved from all allegiance to, or dependence upon, the Crown or Parliament of Great Britain".[45] In accordance with those instructions, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia presented a three-part resolution to Congress on June 7. The motion, which was seconded by John Adams, called on Congress to declare independence, form foreign alliances, and prepare a plan of colonial confederation. The part of the resolution relating to declaring independence read:

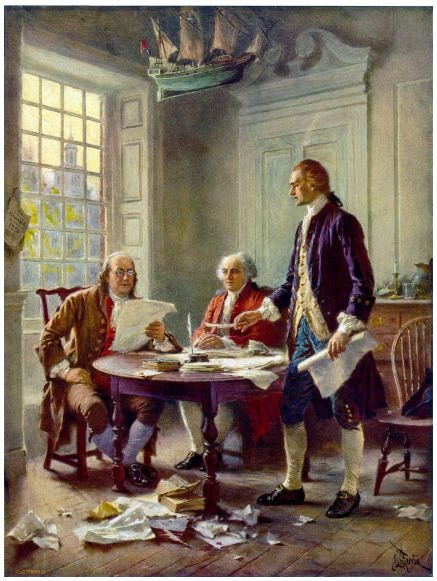
> Resolved, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.[46]

Lee's resolution met with resistance in the ensuing debate. Opponents of the resolution, while conceding that reconciliation with Great Britain was unlikely, argued that declaring independence was premature, and that securing foreign aid should take priority.[47] Advocates of the resolution countered that foreign governments would not intervene in an internal British struggle, and so a formal declaration of independence was needed before foreign aid was possible. All Congress needed to do, they insisted, was to "declare a fact which already exists".[48] Delegates from Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, and New York were still not yet authorized to vote for independence, however, and some of them threatened to leave Congress if the resolution were adopted. Congress therefore voted on June 10 to postpone further discussion of Lee's resolution for three weeks.[49] Until then, Congress decided that a committee should prepare a document announcing and explaining independence in the event that Lee's resolution was approved when it was brought up again in July.

Support for a Congressional declaration of independence was consolidated in the final weeks of June 1776. On June 14, the Connecticut Assembly instructed its delegates to propose independence, and the following day the legislatures of New Hampshire and Delaware authorized their delegates to declare independence.[50] In Pennsylvania, political struggles ended with the dissolution of the colonial assembly, and on June 18 a new Conference of Committees under Thomas McKean authorized Pennsylvania's delegates to declare independence.[51] On June 15, the Provincial Congress of New Jersey, which had been governing the province since January 1776, resolved that Royal Governor William Franklin was "an enemy to the liberties of this country" and had him arrested.[52] On June 21, they chose new delegates to Congress and empowered them to join in a declaration of independence.[53]

Only Maryland and New York had yet to authorize independence. When the Continental Congress had adopted Adams's radical May 15 preamble, Maryland's delegates walked out and sent to the Maryland Convention for instructions.[54] On May 20, the Maryland Convention rejected Adams's preamble, instructing its delegates to remain against independence, but Samuel Chase went to Maryland and, thanks to local resolutions in favor of independence, was able to get the Maryland Convention to change its mind on June 28.[55] Only the New York delegates were unable to get revised instructions. When Congress had been considering the resolution of independence on June 8, the New York Provincial Congress told the delegates to wait.[56] But on June 30, the Provincial Congress evacuated New York as British forces approached, and would not convene again until July 10. This meant that New York's delegates would not be authorized to declare independence until after Congress had made its decision.[57]

Draft and adoption



This idealized depiction of (left to right) Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson working on the Declaration (Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, 1900) was widely reprinted.[58]

While political maneuvering was setting the stage for an official declaration of independence, a document explaining the decision was being written. On June 11, 1776, Congress appointed a "Committee of Five", consisting of John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, Robert R. Livingston of New York, and Roger Sherman of Connecticut, to draft a declaration. Because the committee left no minutes, there is some uncertainty about how the drafting process proceeded—accounts written many years later by Jefferson and Adams, although frequently cited, are contradictory and not entirely reliable.[59] What is certain is that the committee, after discussing the general outline that the document should follow, decided that Jefferson would write the first draft.[60] The committee in general, and Jefferson in particular, thought Adams should write the document, but Adams persuaded the committee to choose Jefferson and promised to consult with Jefferson personally.[2] Considering Congress's busy schedule, Jefferson probably had limited time for writing over the next seventeen days, and likely wrote the draft quickly.[61] He then consulted the others, made some changes, and then produced another copy incorporating these alterations. The committee presented this copy to the Congress on June 28, 1776. The title of the document was "A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled."[62] Congress ordered that the draft "lie on the table".[63]

On Monday, July 1, having tabled the draft of the declaration, Congress resolved itself into a committee of the whole, with Benjamin Harrison of Virginia presiding, and resumed debate on Lee's resolution of independence.[64] John Dickinson made one last effort to delay the decision, arguing that Congress should not declare independence without first securing a foreign alliance and finalizing the Articles of Confederation.[65] John Adams gave a speech in reply to Dickinson, restating the case for an immediate declaration.

After a long day of speeches, a vote was taken. As always, each colony cast a single vote; the delegation for each colony—numbering two to seven members—voted amongst themselves to determine the colony's vote. Pennsylvania and South Carolina voted against declaring independence. The New York delegation, lacking permission to vote for independence, abstained. Delaware cast no vote because the delegation was split between Thomas McKean (who voted yes) and George Read (who voted no). The remaining nine delegations voted in favor of independence, which meant that the resolution had been approved by the committee of the whole. The next step was for the resolution to be voted upon by the Congress itself. Edward Rutledge of South Carolina, who was opposed to Lee's resolution but desirous of unanimity, moved that the vote be postponed until the following day.[66]

Jefferson drafted the Declaration on this portable lap desk of his own design.

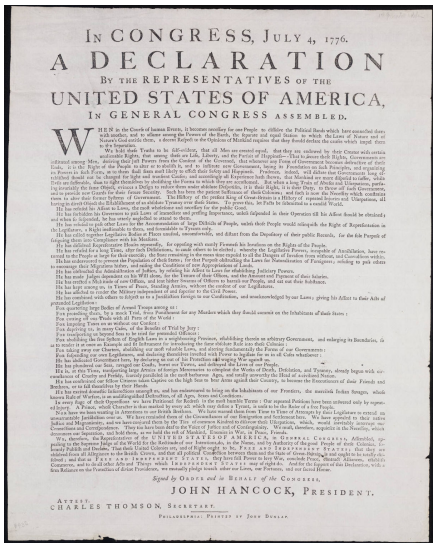
On July 2, South Carolina reversed its position and voted for independence. In the Pennsylvania delegation, Dickinson and Robert Morris abstained, allowing the delegation to vote three-to-two in favor of independence. The tie in the Delaware delegation was broken by the timely arrival of Caesar Rodney, who voted for independence. The New York delegation abstained once again, since they were still not authorized to vote for independence, although they would be allowed to do so by the New York Provincial Congress a week later.[67] The resolution of independence had been adopted with twelve affirmative votes and one abstention. With this, the colonies had officially severed political ties with Great Britain.[68] In a now-famous letter written to his wife on the following day, John Adams predicted that July 2 would become a great American holiday.[69] Adams thought that the vote for independence would be commemorated; he did not foresee that Americans—including himself—would instead celebrate Independence Day on the date that the announcement of that act was finalized.[70]

After voting in favor of the resolution of independence, Congress turned its attention to the committee's draft of the declaration. Over several days of debate, Congress made a few changes in wording and deleted nearly a fourth of the text, most notably a passage critical of the slave trade, changes that Jefferson resented.[71] On July 4, 1776, the wording of the Declaration of Independence was approved and sent to the printer for publication.

Text

The first sentence of the Declaration asserts as a matter of Natural law the ability of a people to assume political independence, and acknowledges that the grounds for such independence must be reasonable.[72]

> When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

A DECLARATION

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

JOHN HANCOCK, PRESIDENT.

ATTEST.
CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY.

The Dunlap broadside was the first published version of the Declaration.

The next section, the famous preamble, includes the ideas and ideals that were principles of the Declaration. It is also an assertion of what is known as the "right of revolution": that is, people have certain rights, and when a government violates these rights, the people have the right to "alter or abolish" that government.[73]

> 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,[74] 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 of 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.
>
> Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

The next section is a list of charges against King George III, which aim to demonstrate that he has violated the colonists' rights and is therefore unfit to be their ruler:[75]

> Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.
>
> > He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.
> >
> > He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.
> >
> > He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.
> >
> > He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.
> >
> > He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.
> >
> > He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.
> >
> > He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.
> >
> > He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.
> >
> > He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.
> >
> > He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.
> >
> > He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.
> >
> > He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.
> >
> > He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:
> >
> > > For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

> For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:
>
> For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:
>
> For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:
>
> For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:
>
> For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences
>
> For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:
>
> For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:
>
> For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.
>
> He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.
>
> He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.
>
> He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.
>
> He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.
>
> He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.
>
> In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Many Americans still felt a kinship with the people of Great Britain, and had appealed in vain to the prominent among them, as well as to Parliament, to convince the King to relax his more objectionable policies toward the colonies. The next section represents disappointment that these attempts had been unsuccessful.[75]

> Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

In the final section, the signers assert that there exist conditions under which people must change their government, that the British have produced such conditions, and by necessity the colonies must throw off political ties with the British Crown and become independent states. The conclusion incorporates language from Lee's resolution of independence that had been passed on July 2.[76]

> We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United

> Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Influences

Historians have often sought to identify the sources that most influenced the words and political philosophy of the Declaration of Independence. By Jefferson's own admission, the Declaration contained no original ideas, but was instead a statement of sentiments widely shared by supporters of the American Revolution. As he explained in 1825:

> Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion.[77]

English political philosopher John Locke (1632–1704)

Jefferson's most immediate sources were two documents written in June 1776: his own draft of the preamble of the Constitution of Virginia, and George Mason's draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Ideas and phrases from both of these documents appear in the Declaration of Independence.[78] They were, in turn, directly influenced by the 1689 English Declaration of Rights, which formally ended the reign of King James II.[79] During the American Revolution, Jefferson and other Americans looked to the English Declaration of Rights as a model of how to end the reign of an unjust king.[80] The Scottish Declaration of Arbroath (1320) and the Dutch Act of Abjuration (1581) have also been offered as models for Jefferson's Declaration, but these arguments have been disputed.[81]

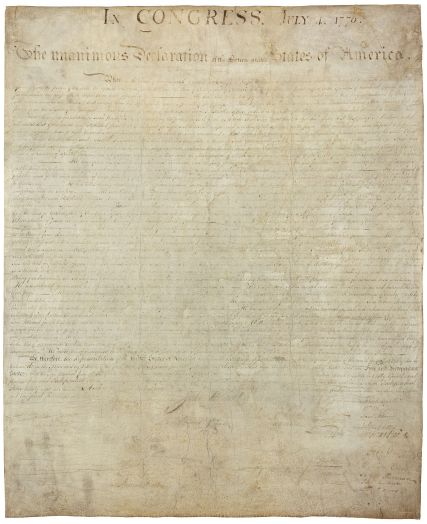
Jefferson wrote that a number of authors exerted a general influence on the words of the Declaration.[82] The English political theorist John Locke, whom Jefferson called one of "the three greatest men that have ever lived",[83] is usually cited as one of the primary influences. In 1922, historian Carl L. Becker wrote that "Most Americans had absorbed Locke's works as a kind of political gospel; and the Declaration, in its form, in its phraseology, follows closely certain sentences in Locke's second treatise on government."[84] The extent of Locke's influence on the American Revolution has been questioned by some subsequent scholars, however. Historian Ray Forrest Harvey declared in 1937, as he argued for the dominant influence of the Swiss jurist Jean Jacques Burlamaqui, that Jefferson and Locke were at "two opposite poles" in their political philosophy, as evidenced by Jefferson's use in the Declaration of Independence of the phrase "pursuit of happiness" instead of "property."[85] Other scholars emphasized the influence of republicanism rather than Locke's classical liberalism.[86] Historian Garry Wills argued that Jefferson was influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, particularly Francis Hutcheson, rather than Locke,[87] an interpretation that has been strongly criticized.[88]

Legal historian John Phillip Reid has written that the emphasis on the political philosophy of the Declaration has been misplaced. The Declaration is not a philosophical tract about natural rights, argues Reid, but is instead a legal document—an indictment against King George for violating the constitutional rights of the colonists.[89] In contrast,

historian Dennis J. Mahoney argues that the Declaration is not a legal document at all, but a philosophical document influenced by Emerich de Vattel, Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, and Samuel Pufendorf.[90] Historian David Armitage has argued that the Declaration is a document of international law. According to Armitage, the Declaration was strongly influenced by de Vattel's *The Law of Nations*, a book that Benjamin Franklin said was "continually in the hands of the members of our Congress".[91] Armitage writes that because "Vattel made independence fundamental to his definition of statehood", the primary purpose of the Declaration was "to express the international legal sovereignty of the United States". If the United States were to have any hope of being recognized by the European powers, the American revolutionaries had to first make it clear that they were no longer dependent on Great Britain.[92]

Signing

The handwritten copy of the Declaration of Independence that was signed by Congress is dated July 4, 1776. The signatures of fifty-six delegates are affixed; however, whether or not Congress actually signed the document on this date has long been the subject of debate. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams all wrote that the Declaration had been signed by Congress on July 4.[93] But in 1796, signer Thomas McKean disputed that the Declaration had been signed on July 4, pointing out that some signers were not then present, including several who were not even elected to Congress until after that date.[94]



The signed copy of the Declaration, now badly faded, is on display at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

According to the 1911 record of events by the U.S. State Department, under Sec. Philander C. Knox, the Declaration was transposed on paper, adopted by the Continental Congress, and signed by John Hancock, President of the Congress, on July 4, 1776. [95] On August 2, 1776 a parchment paper copy of the Declaration was signed by 56 persons. [95] Many of these signers were not present when the original Declaration was adopted on July 4. [95] One signer, Matthew Thornton, from New Hampshire, who agreed to the Declaration and having joined the Continental Congress, signed on November 4, 1776. [95]

Historians have generally accepted McKean's version of events, arguing that the famous signed version of the Declaration was created after July 19 and was not signed by Congress until August 2.[96] In 1986, legal historian Wilfred Ritz argued that historians had misunderstood the primary documents and given too much credence to McKean, who had not been present in Congress on July 4.[97] According to Ritz, about thirty-four delegates signed the Declaration on July 4, and the others signed on or after August 2.[98] Historians who reject a July 4 signing maintain that most delegates signed on August 2, and that those eventual signers who were not present added their names later.[99]

The most famous signature on the engrossed copy is that of John Hancock, who, as President of Congress, presumably signed first.[100] Hancock's large, flamboyant signature became iconic, and *John Hancock* emerged in the United States as an informal synonym for "signature".[101] Two future U.S. presidents, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, were among the signatories.

On July 4, 1776, Continental Congress President John Hancock's signature authenticated the United States Declaration of Independence.

Various legends about the signing of the Declaration emerged years later, when the document had become an important national symbol. In one famous story, John Hancock supposedly said that Congress, having signed the Declaration, must now "all hang together", and Benjamin Franklin replied: "Yes, we must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately." The quote did not appear in print until more than fifty years after Franklin's death.[102]

Publication and reaction

Johannes Adam Simon Oertel's painting *Pulling Down the Statue of King George III, N.Y.C.*, ca. 1859, depicts citizens destroying a statue of King George after the Declaration was read in New York City on July 9, 1776.

After Congress approved the final wording of the Declaration on July 4, a handwritten copy was sent a few blocks away to the printing shop of John Dunlap. Through the night Dunlap printed about 200 broadsides for distribution. Before long, the Declaration was read to audiences and reprinted in newspapers across the thirteen states. The first official public reading of the document was by John Nixon in the yard of Independence Hall on July 8; public readings also took place on that day in Trenton, New Jersey, and Easton, Pennsylvania.[103] A German translation of the Declaration was published in Philadelphia by July 9.[104]

President of Congress John Hancock sent a broadside to General George Washington, instructing him to have it proclaimed "at the Head of the Army in the way you shall think it most proper".[105] Washington had the Declaration read to his troops in New York City on July 9, with the British forces not far away. Washington and Congress hoped the Declaration would inspire the soldiers, and encourage others to join the army.[103] After hearing the Declaration, crowds in many cities tore down and destroyed signs or statues representing royalty. An equestrian statue of King George in New York City was pulled down and the lead used to make musket balls.[106]

William Whipple, signer of the Declaration of Independence, freed his slave believing he could not fight for liberty and own a slave.

British officials in North America sent copies of the Declaration to Great Britain.[107] It was published in British newspapers beginning in mid-August; translations appeared in European newspapers soon after.[108] The North Ministry did not give an official answer to the Declaration, but instead secretly commissioned pamphleteer John Lind to publish a response, which was entitled *Answer to the Declaration of the American Congress*.[109] British Tories denounced the signers of the Declaration for not applying the same principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" to African Americans.[110] Thomas Hutchinson, the former royal governor of Massachusetts, also published a rebuttal.[111] These pamphlets challenged various aspects of the Declaration. Hutchinson argued that the American Revolution was the work of a few conspirators who wanted independence from the outset, and who had finally achieved it by inducing otherwise loyal colonists to rebel.[112] Lind's pamphlet included an anonymous attack on the concept of natural rights written by Jeremy Bentham, an argument he would repeat during the French Revolution.[113] Both pamphlets asked how slave owners in Congress could proclaim that "all men are created equal" without then freeing their own slaves.[114]

Slaves in America became infatuated with the Declaration's principles of freedom and equality and desired the right to "own themselves". In 1778, the call for freedom was great as 30,000 slaves in Virginia fled their slave masters, according to Thomas Jefferson. 4,000 to 5,000 African Americans served in the Continental Army fighting for

American Independence. Slaves were given freedom by enlisting into the Continental Army; 5% of George Washington's forces consisted of African American troops. In 1780, slaves in New York were emboldened, pushed for their own freedom, and took the revolutionary phrases found in the Declaration seriously. One American slave owner and signer of the Declaration of Independence, William Whipple, who fought in the American War of Independence, freed his slave, Prince Whipple, having believed he could not fight for liberty and own a slave. Prince Whipple was one of George Washington's oarsmen as Washington crossed the Delaware River in the Winter of 1776. Having fought for American Independence, however, freed African Americans were denied voting rights and needed a pass to travel between the states.[115]

History of the documents

The copy of the Declaration that was signed by Congress is known as the engrossed or parchment copy. It was probably engrossed (that is, carefully handwritten) by clerk Timothy Matlack.[116] Because of poor conservation of the engrossed copy through the 19th century, a facsimile made in 1823, rather than the original, has become the basis of most modern reproductions.[116] In 1921, custody of the engrossed copy of the Declaration, along with the United States Constitution, was transferred from the State Department to the Library of Congress. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the documents were moved for safekeeping to the United States Bullion Depository at Fort Knox in Kentucky, where they were kept until 1944.[117] In 1952, the engrossed Declaration was transferred to the National Archives, and is now on permanent display at the National Archives in the "Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom".[118]


The Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom in the National Archives building

Although the document signed by Congress and enshrined in the National Archives is usually regarded as *the* Declaration of Independence, historian Julian P. Boyd argued that the Declaration, like Magna Carta, is not a single document. Boyd considered the printed broadsides ordered by Congress to be official texts as well. The Declaration was first published as a broadside that was printed the night of July 4 by John Dunlap of Philadelphia. Dunlap printed about 200 broadsides, of which 26 are known to survive. The 26th copy was discovered in The National Archives in England in 2009.[119] In 1777, Congress commissioned Mary Katherine Goddard to print a new broadside that, unlike the Dunlap broadside, listed the signers of the Declaration.[116] [120] Nine copies of the Goddard broadside are known to still exist.[120] A variety of broadsides printed by the states are also extant.[120]

Several early handwritten copies and drafts of the Declaration have also been preserved. Jefferson kept a four-page draft that late in life he called the "original Rough draught".[121] How many drafts Jefferson wrote prior to this one, and how much of the text was contributed by other committee members, is unknown. In 1947, Boyd discovered a fragment of an earlier draft in Jefferson's handwriting.[122] Jefferson and Adams sent copies of the rough draft, with slight variations, to friends.

During the writing process, Jefferson showed the rough draft to Adams and Franklin, and perhaps other members of the drafting committee,[121] who made a few more changes. Franklin, for example, may have been responsible for changing Jefferson's original phrase "We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable" to "We hold these truths to be self-evident".[123] Jefferson incorporated these changes into a copy that was submitted to Congress in the name of the committee.[121] The copy that was submitted to Congress on June 28 has been lost, and was perhaps destroyed in the printing process,[124] or destroyed during the debates in accordance with Congress's secrecy rule.[125]

Legacy

Having served its original purpose in announcing the independence of the United States, the Declaration was initially neglected in the years immediately following the American Revolution.[126] Early celebrations of Independence Day, like early histories of the Revolution, largely ignored the Declaration. Although the *act* of declaring independence was considered important, the *text* announcing that act attracted little attention.[127] The Declaration was rarely mentioned during the debates about the United States Constitution, and its language was not incorporated into that document.[128] George Mason's draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights was more influential, and its language was echoed in state constitutions and state bills of rights more often than Jefferson's words.[129] "In none of these documents", wrote Pauline Maier, "is there any evidence whatsoever that the Declaration of Independence lived in men's minds as a classic statement of American political principles."[130]

Influence in other countries

Some leaders of the French Revolution admired the Declaration of Independence[130] but were more interested in the new American state constitutions.[131] The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) borrowed language from George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights and not Jefferson's Declaration, although Jefferson was in Paris at the time and was consulted during the drafting process.[132] According to historian David Armitage, the United States Declaration of Independence did prove to be internationally influential, but not as a statement of human rights. Armitage argued that the Declaration was the first in a new genre of declarations of independence that announced the creation of new states.

Other French leaders were directly influenced by the text of the Declaration of Independence itself. The *Manifesto of the Province of Flanders* (1790) was the first foreign derivation of the Declaration;[133] others include the Venezuelan Declaration of Independence (1811), the Liberian Declaration of Independence (1847), the declarations of secession by the Confederate States of America (1860–61), and the Vietnam Declaration of Independence (1945).[134] These declarations echoed the United States Declaration of Independence in announcing the independence of a new state, without necessarily endorsing the political philosophy of the original.[135]

Revival of interest

In the United States, interest in the Declaration was revived in the 1790s with the emergence of America's first political parties.[136] Throughout the 1780s, few Americans knew, or cared, who wrote the Declaration.[137] But in the next decade, Jeffersonian Republicans sought political advantage over their rival Federalists by promoting both the importance of the Declaration and Jefferson as its author.[138] Federalists responded by casting doubt on Jefferson's authorship or originality, and by emphasizing that independence was declared by the whole Congress, with Jefferson as just one member of the drafting committee. Federalists insisted that Congress's act of declaring independence, in which Federalist John Adams had played a major role, was more important than the document announcing that act.[139] But this view, like the Federalist Party, would fade away, and before long the act of declaring independence would become synonymous with the document.

A less partisan appreciation for the Declaration emerged in the years following the War of 1812, thanks to a growing American nationalism and a renewed interest in the history of the Revolution.[141] In 1817, Congress commissioned John Trumbull's famous painting of the signers, which was exhibited to large crowds before being installed in the Capitol.[142] The earliest commemorative printings of the Declaration also appeared at this time, offering many Americans their first view of the signed document.[143] Collective biographies of the signers were first published in the 1820s,[144] giving birth to what Garry Wills called the "cult of the signers".[145] In the years that followed, many stories about the writing and signing of the document would be published for the first time.

John Trumbull's famous painting is often identified as a depiction of the signing of the Declaration, but it actually shows the drafting committee presenting its work to the Congress.[140]

When interest in the Declaration was revived, the sections that were most important in 1776—the announcement of the independence of the United States and the grievances against King George—were no longer relevant. But the second paragraph, with its talk of self-evident truths and unalienable rights, were applicable long after the war had ended.[146] Because the Constitution and the Bill of Rights lacked sweeping statements about rights and equality, advocates of marginalized groups turned to the Declaration for support.[147] Starting in the 1820s, variations of the Declaration were issued to proclaim the rights of workers, farmers, women, and others.[148] In 1848, for example, the Seneca Falls Convention, a meeting of women's rights advocates, declared that "all men and women are created equal".[149]

Slavery and the Declaration

Further information: Slavery in the colonial United States

The Declaration would have its most prominent influence on the debate over slavery.[150] The contradiction between the claim that "all men are created equal" and the existence of American slavery attracted comment when the Declaration was first published. As mentioned above, although Jefferson had included a paragraph in his initial draft that strongly indicted Britain's role in the slave trade, this was deleted from the final version.[71] Jefferson himself was a prominent Virginia slave holder having owned hundreds of slaves.[151] Referring to this seeming contradiction, English abolitionist Thomas Day wrote in a 1776 letter, "If there be an object truly ridiculous in nature, it is an American patriot, signing resolutions of independency with the one hand, and with the other brandishing a whip over his affrighted slaves."[152] In the 19th century, the Declaration took on a special significance for the abolitionist movement. Historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown wrote that "abolitionists tended to interpret the Declaration of Independence as a theological as well as a political document".[150] Abolitionist leaders Benjamin Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison adopted the "twin rocks" of "the Bible and the Declaration of Independence" as the basis for their philosophies. "As long as there remains a single copy of the Declaration of Independence, or of the Bible, in our land," wrote Garrison, "we will not despair."[153] For radical abolitionists like Garrison, the most important part of the Declaration was its assertion of the right of revolution: Garrison called for the destruction of the government under the Constitution, and the creation of a new state dedicated to the principles of the Declaration.[154]

The controversial question of whether to add additional slave states to the United States coincided with the growing stature of the Declaration. The first major public debate about slavery and the Declaration took place during the Missouri controversy of 1819 to 1821.[155] Antislavery Congressmen argued that the language of the Declaration indicated that the Founding Fathers of the United States had been opposed to slavery in principle, and so new slave states should not be added to the country.[156] Proslavery Congressmen, led by Senator Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina, argued that since the Declaration was not a part of the Constitution, it had no relevance to the question.[157]

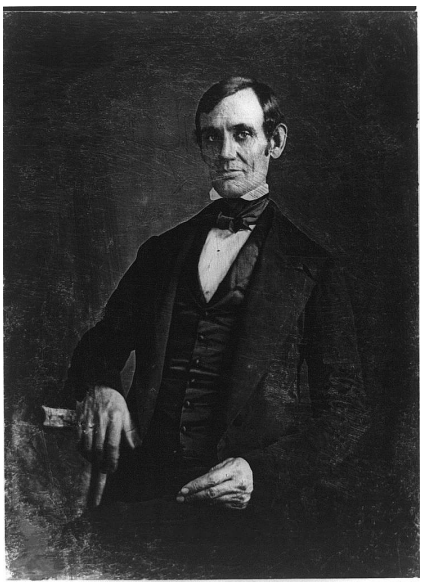
With the antislavery movement gaining momentum, defenders of slavery such as John Randolph and John C. Calhoun found it necessary to argue that the Declaration's assertion that "all men are created equal" was false, or at

least that it did not apply to black people.[158] During the debate over the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1853, for example, Senator John Pettit of Indiana argued that "all men are created equal", rather than a "self-evident truth", was a "self-evident lie".[159] Opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, including Salmon P. Chase and Benjamin Wade, defended the Declaration and what they saw as its antislavery principles.[160]

Lincoln and the Declaration

The Declaration's relationship to slavery was taken up in 1854 by Abraham Lincoln, a little-known former Congressman who idolized the Founding Fathers.[161] Lincoln thought that the Declaration of Independence expressed the highest principles of the American Revolution, and that the Founding Fathers had tolerated slavery with the expectation that it would ultimately wither away.[6] For the United States to legitimize the expansion of slavery in the Kansas-Nebraska Act, thought Lincoln, was to repudiate the principles of the Revolution. In his October 1854 Peoria speech, Lincoln said:

> Nearly eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the other declaration, that for some men to enslave others is a "sacred right of self-government." ... Our republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. ... Let us re-adopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it, the practices, and policy, which harmonize with it. ... If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union: but we shall have saved it, as to make, and keep it, forever worthy of the saving.[162]



Congressman Abraham Lincoln
Shepherd, ***1845-1846***

The meaning of the Declaration was a recurring topic in the famed debates between Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in 1858. Douglas argued that "all men are created equal" in the Declaration referred to white men only. The purpose of the Declaration, he said, had simply been to justify the independence of the United States, and not to proclaim the equality of any "inferior or degraded race".[163] Lincoln, however, thought that the language of the Declaration was deliberately universal, setting a high moral standard for which the American republic should aspire. "I had thought the Declaration contemplated the progressive improvement in the condition of all men everywhere", he said.[164] According to Pauline Maier, Douglas's interpretation was more historically accurate, but Lincoln's view ultimately prevailed. "In Lincoln's hands", wrote Maier, "the Declaration of Independence became first and foremost a living document" with "a set of goals to be realized over time".[165]

> *[T]here is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man.*
>
> Abraham Lincoln, 1858[166]

Like Daniel Webster, James Wilson, and Joseph Story before him, Lincoln argued that the Declaration of Independence was a founding document of the United States, and that this had important implications for interpreting the Constitution, which had been ratified more than a decade after the Declaration.[167] Although the Constitution did not use the word "equality", Lincoln believed that "all men are created equal" remained a part of the nation's founding principles.[168] He famously expressed this belief in the opening sentence of his 1863 Gettysburg Address: "Four score and seven years ago [i.e. in 1776] our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Lincoln's view of the Declaration as a moral guide to interpreting the Constitution became influential. "For most people now," wrote Garry Wills in 1992, "the Declaration means what Lincoln told us it means, as a way of

correcting the Constitution itself without overthrowing it."[169] Admirers of Lincoln, such as Harry V. Jaffa, praised this development. Critics of Lincoln, notably Willmoore Kendall and Mel Bradford, argued that Lincoln dangerously expanded the scope of the national government, and violated states' rights, by reading the Declaration into the Constitution.[170]

Women's suffrage and the Declaration

In July 1848, the first *Woman's Rights Convention* was held in Seneca Falls, New York. The convention was organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Mary Ann McClintock, Martha White, and Jane Hunt. In their Declaration of Sentiments, patterned off of the Declaration of Independence, the convention members demanded social and political equality for women. Their motto was that "All men *and women* are created equal" and the convention demanded suffrage for women. The suffrage movement was supported by William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglas.[171]

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her two sons. *1848*.

In popular culture

Presentation of the Declaration depicted on a United States postal issue of 1869

The adoption of the Declaration of Independence was dramatized in the 1969 Tony Award-winning musical play *1776*, and the 1972 movie of the same name, as well as in the 2008 television miniseries *John Adams*. The engrossed copy of the Declaration is central to the 2004 Hollywood film *National Treasure*, in which the main character steals the document because he believes it has secret clues to a treasure hidden by some of the Founding Fathers of the United States. The Declaration figures prominently in *The Probability Broach*, wherein the point of divergence rests in the addition of a single word to the document, causing it to state that governments "derive their just power from the *unanimous* consent of the governed". The Declaration also plays a major part in *Honour Among Thieves*, a novel by Jeffrey Archer where Saddam Hussein tries to steal the Declaration and publicly burn it on July 4.

Notes

[1] Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, 5.

[2] (http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning_history/revolution/revolution_declaringindependence.cfm) From Adams' notes: "Why will you not? You ought to do it." "I will not." "Why?" "Reasons enough." "What can be your reasons?" "Reason first, you are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second, I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can." "Well," said Jefferson, "if you are decided, I will do as well as I can." "Very well. When you have drawn it up, we will have a meeting.""

[3] Boyd (1976), *The Declaration of Independence: The Mystery of the Lost Original*, pg. 438

[4] Lucas, "Justifying America", 85.

[5] Ellis, *American Creation*, 55–56.

[6] McPherson, *Second American Revolution*, 126.

[7] Hazelton, *Declaration History*, 19.
[8] Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence*, 31.
[9] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 162.
[10] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 200–02.
[11] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 180–82.
[12] Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 241.
[13] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 224–25.
[14] Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 241–42. The writings in question include Wilson's *Considerations on the Authority of Parliament* and Jefferson's *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (both 1774), as well as Samuel Adams's 1768 Circular Letter.
[15] Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 168; Ferling, *Leap in the Dark*, 123–24.
[16] Hazelton, *Declaration History*, 13; Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 318.
[17] Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 318.
[18] Maier, *American Scripture*, 25. The text of the 1775 king's speech is online (http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbpe1440150a))), published by the American Memory project.
[19] Maier, *American Scripture*, 25.
[20] Rakove, *Beginnings of National Politics*, 88–90.
[21] Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence*, 270; Maier, *American Scripture*, 31–32.
[22] Jensen, *Founding*, 667.
[23] Rakove, *Beginnings of National Politics*, 89; Maier, *American Scripture*, 33.
[24] Maier, *American Scripture*, 33–34.
[25] Hazelton, *Declaration History*, 209; Maier, *American Scripture*, 25–27.
[26] Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 67.
[27] Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 77.
[28] Maier, *American Scripture*, 30.
[29] Maier, *American Scripture*, 59.
[30] Jensen, *Founding*, 671; Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 78.
[31] Maier, *American Scripture*, 48, and Appendix A, which lists the state and local declarations.
[32] Jensen, *Founding*, 678–79.
[33] Jensen, *Founding*, 679; Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 92–93.
[34] Maier, *American Scripture*, 69–72, quote on 72.
[35] Maier, *American Scripture*, 48. The modern scholarly consensus is that the best-known and earliest of the local declarations, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, allegedly adopted in May 1775 (a full year before other local declarations), is most likely inauthentic; Maier, *American Scripture*, 174.
[36] Jensen, *Founding*, 682.
[37] Jensen, *Founding*, 683.
[38] Jensen, *Founding*, 684; Maier, *American Scripture*, 37. For the full text of the May 10 resolve see the *Journals of the Continental Congress* (http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(jc004109)):).
[39] Jensen, *Founding*, 684.
[40] Burnett, *Continental Congress*, 159. The text of Adams's letter is online (http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(dg003624))::).
[41] Maier, *American Scripture*, 37; Jensen, *Founding*, 684. For the full text of the May 15 preamble see the *Journals of the Continental Congress* (http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(jc004113))).
[42] Rakove, *National Politics*, 96; Jensen, *Founding*, 684; Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 94.
[43] Rakove, *National Politics*, 97; Jensen, *Founding*, 685.
[44] Maier, *American Scripture*, 38.
[45] Boyd, *Evolution*, 18; Maier, *American Scripture*, 63. The text of the May 15 Virginia resolution is online (http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/const/const02.htm) at Yale Law School's Avalon Project.
[46] Maier, *American Scripture*, 41; Boyd, *Evolution*, 19.
[47] Jensen, *Founding*, 689–90; Maier, *American Scripture*, 42.
[48] Jensen, *Founding*, 689; Armitage, *Global History*, 33–34. The quote is from Jefferson's notes; Boyd, *Papers of Jefferson*, 1:311.
[49] Maier, *American Scripture*, 42–43; Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 106.
[50] Jensen, *Founding*, 691–92.
[51] Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 106–07; Jensen, *Founding*, 691.
[52] Jensen, *Founding*, 692.
[53] Jensen, *Founding*, 693.
[54] Jensen, *Founding*, 694.
[55] Jensen, *Founding*, 694–96; Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 96; Maier, *American Scripture*, 68.
[56] Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 118; Jensen, *Founding*, 698.
[57] Friedenwald, *Interpretation*, 119–20.

[58] Dupont and Onuf, 3.
[59] Maier, *American Scripture*, 97–105; Boyd, *Evolution*, 21.
[60] Boyd, *Evolution*, 22.
[61] Maier, *American Scripture*, 104.
[62] Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, 4.
[63] Jensen, *Founding*, 701.
[64] Burnett, *Continental Congress*, 181.
[65] Jensen, *Founding*, 699.
[66] Burnett, *Continental Congress*, 182; Jensen, *Founding*, 700.
[67] Maier, *American Scripture*, 45.
[68] Boyd, *Evolution*, 19.
[69] Jensen, *Founding*, 703–04.
[70] Maier, *American Scripture*, 160–61.
[71] Maier, *American Scripture*, 146–50.
[72] Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, 277-279.
[73] Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, 9.
[74] The published Declaration uses "*un*alienable", rather than the now more common "*in*alienable". This appears to simply be a stylistic issue, and some drafts, notably that by Thomas Jefferson, used *in*alienable. See: Unalienable / Inalienable (http://www.ushistory.org/DECLARATION/unalienable.htm)
[75] Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, 214-215.
[76] Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, 210-211.
[77] "TO HENRY LEE — Thomas Jefferson The Works, vol. 12 (Correspondence and Papers 1816-1826; 1905)" (http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php?title=808&chapter=88496&layout=html&Itemid=27). The Online Library of Liberty. May 8, 1825. . Retrieved March 8, 2008.
[78] Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, 221; Maier, *American Scripture*, 125–26.
[79] Maier, *American Scripture*, 126–28.
[80] Maier, *American Scripture*, 53–57.
[81] Maier found no evidence that the Dutch Act of Abjuration served as a model for the Declaration and considers the argument "unpersuasive" (*American Scripture*, 264). Armitage discounts the influence of the Scottish and Dutch acts, and writes that neither was called "declarations of independence" until fairly recently (*Global History*, 42–44). For the argument in favor of the influence of the Dutch act, see Stephen E. Lucas, "The 'Plakkaat van Verlatinge': A Neglected Model for the American Declaration of Independence", in Rosemarijn Hofte and Johanna C. Kardux, eds., *Connecting Cultures: The Netherlands in Five Centuries of Transatlantic Exchange* (Amsterdam, 1994), 189–207.
[82] Boyd, *Evolution*, 16–17.
[83] "The Three Greatest Men" (http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm033.html). . Retrieved June 13, 2009. "Jefferson identified Bacon, Locke, and Newton as "the three greatest men that have ever lived, without any exception". Their works in the physical and moral sciences were instrumental in Jefferson's education and world view."
[84] Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, 27.
[85] Ray Forrest Harvey, *Jean Jacques Burlamaqui: A Liberal Tradition in American Constitutionalism* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1937), 120.
[86] A brief, online overview of the classical liberalism vs. republicanism debate is Alec Ewald, "The American Republic: 1760-1870" (2004) (http://www.flowofhistory.org/themes/american_republic/overview.php).
[87] Wills, *Inventing America*, especially chs. 11–13. Wills concludes (p. 315) that "the air of enlightened America was full of Hutcheson's politics, not Locke's."
[88] Hamowy, "Jefferson and the Scottish Enlightenment", argues that Wills gets much wrong (p. 523), that the Declaration seems to be influenced by Hutcheson because Hutcheson was, like Jefferson, influenced by Locke (pp. 508–09), and that Jefferson often wrote of Locke's influence, but never mentioned Hutcheson in any of his writings (p. 514). See also Kenneth S. Lynn, "Falsifying Jefferson," *Commentary* 66 (Oct. 1978), 66–71. Ralph Luker, in "Garry Wills and the New Debate Over the Declaration of Independence" (http://www.vqronline.org/articles/1980/spring/luker-garry-wills/) (*The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 1980, 244–61) agreed that Wills overstated Hutcheson's influence to provide a communitarian reading of the Declaration, but he also argued that Wills's critics similarly read their own views into the document.
[89] John Phillip Reid, "The Irrelevance of the Declaration", in Hendrik Hartog, ed., *Law in the American Revolution and the Revolution in the Law* (New York University Press, 1981), 46–89.
[90] Mahoney, *Declaration of Independence*.
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[121] Boyd, "Lost Original", 446.
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[124] Boyd, "Lost Original", 448–50. Boyd argued that if a document was signed on July 4--which he thought unlikely--it would have been the Fair Copy, and probably would have been signed only by Hancock and Thomson.
[125] Ritz, "From the *Here*", speculates that the Fair Copy was immediately sent to the printer so that copies could be made for each member of Congress to consult during the debate. All of these copies were then destroyed, theorizes Ritz, to preserve secrecy.
[126] Armitage, *Global History*, 87–88; Maier, *American Scripture*, 162, 168–69.
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[136] McDonald, "Jefferson's Reputation", 172.
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[141] Detweiler, "Changing Reputation", 571–72; Maier, *American Scripture*, 175–78.
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[153] Mayer, *All on Fire*, 53, 115.
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