

The American Dreamer's Club

The Declaration of Independence signed on July 4th, 1776. Thomas Jefferson was not the only creator of the document. Roger Sherman, John Adams, Robert Livingston, and Benjamin Franklin also helped. The declaration explains self-evident truths, the purpose of government, as well as grievances. The main purpose of the document was to explain why America should be free.

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.

The Declaration of Independence describes an ideal society. Being equal and having these unalienable Rights is the American Dream. Yet, since its creation, it has remained a dream. The United States has a large population of individuals fighting even now for this dream. In reality, not everyone is equal and not everyone has these Rights. The Declaration of Independence is even less relevant in today's government than it was during its creation.

The authors of The Declaration of Independence were a bit hypocritical. One of the self-evident truths states that all men are equal. Yet, 3 of the 5 committee members, including Thomas Jefferson, owned slaves. It is not clear whether the rights extend to slaves or women. Because of this ambiguity, the document sets the stage for discrimination of these groups. One thing that people fail to consider is the intended audience of the document. Who was the document meant to serve? Who were these property-holding men writing on behalf of?

The truth is that we are still fighting to uphold the ideals of the Declaration. What's worse is that we have never upheld the ideals to their fullest extent. The Declaration of Independence

also covers the duties of our government. The government should secure these rights for all its citizens on our behalf. Yet, in our society today, we still face issues of equal rights for all. If we look at the media we can see that some people don't have the same rights as others. Facebook is now flooded with videos suggesting this very argument. Videos of inequality, racism, and discrimination travel across the web.

One thing citizens should not is the word choice of the Declaration of Independence. The declaration says "by their Creator" rather than God. It does not distinguish any religion over another. Yet, America has become a Christian-centered country. We are all created by some "Creator" by the logic of the document. It does not say who or whether it is the same "Creator". What it does say, is that we each have "unalienable Rights" which can no one can take from us. Yet, those of differing religions have suffered persecution and violations of these "Rights". Although religion isn't covered in the Declaration of Independence, such discrimination violates it.

Another controversial issue that we still face today is racial discrimination. Slavery is no longer an issue thanks to the efforts of Abraham Lincoln. He is one of many individuals in American history to fight for the ideal in the declaration. We no longer accept slavery in our society and it is even punishable by law. That brought us one step closer to the equality mentioned in the Declaration of Independence. As history progressed, America saw other fighters of racial equality. People like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman spoke out against inequality. In today's society, the gap in racial rights is not as large due to their efforts. Yet, the gap still exists. Discrimination of people of color is still common. Microaggressions and blatant racism are present and affect many people of color today. The Declaration of Independence didn't talk about persons of color specifically, yet the rights of

minorities should be observed. Today, many people of color face issues of equality and our government is divided on the issue. On one hand, our current administration has an agenda against people of Mexican descent. Although the current debate is about immigration, Mexican American citizens are also affected. Some of the arguments for stricter immigration include statements about the character of Mexicans. These statements induce discrimination against our own citizens whether they intend to or not. Our own citizens of Mexican descent are being discriminated against due to this issue. How can all men be equal if some are suffering due to societal discrimination? Our current government is violating the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence with their approach.

The term "man" should mean "mankind" or "homo sapiens" in general. Documents like the Declaration of Independence use non-inclusive language such as this, which has created a gap in this country. Women have never been equal to man. Women do enjoy more freedoms as time goes on. That is due to their constant fight for the equality expressed in the declaration. Even now, women fight for their health rights and equality. The government is not upholding their rights. There is much debate on things like abortion and birth control. It's because it doesn't serve our government to care about such rights. Our government consists of white, upper-class men. Yes, our last president was of African American descent. However, he is one in 45. None of our presidents have been women. When our government creates laws and policies, they do so with people like themselves in mind. This may be human nature, but our current government does women a disservice by doing so. Women still don't enjoy the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence makes no comment on sexual orientation or sexual identification. It does, however, say that we have the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of

happiness. The pursuit of happiness is a bit ambiguous. We have the right to pursue anything that brings us happiness within the confines of the law. As long as that pursuit doesn't bring harm to others, we have the right to pursue it. This should extend to orientation as well as gender expression. Love brings happiness. How and who we love should be at our discretion (within the confines of the law). How we express our gender should also be to our discretion. Yet, there is so much conflict surrounding LGBT rights. By limiting LGBT rights, the government throws away the ideas of the declaration. If you make exceptions for one, you have to make exceptions for all. As a society, we shouldn't pick and choose which citizens have rights. Citizens of this country should have the rights outlined in our founding documents. Those rights should extend to every citizen regardless of biological, social, or religious differences. The declaration does not say "only citizens of Caucasian ancestry shall have these rights". It does not say "only citizens who are attracted to members of the opposing biological sex shall have these rights". All of United States' citizens should have the same rights but the reality is that we don't.

The only exception to these Rights should be the case of criminals. If someone breaks the law, they are forfeiting their rights. Sexual orientation/identification, religious affiliation, and being a woman are not crimes. Yet, these groups form their own club of those who are denied the true American dream. The denial comes from societal constructs and ideas. Negative opinion about another person's lifestyle should not dictate the law. As long as no one tries to take away another person's life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, they should be free to live their life as dictated by the Declaration of Independence. The sad reality is that The Declaration of Independence is a beautiful document that has never been upheld to its full potential. Our government and society has let their opinion overshadow what has been laid out in this historical

document. Within our current government, it seems as if the Declaration of Independence will forever be a pipe dream.

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