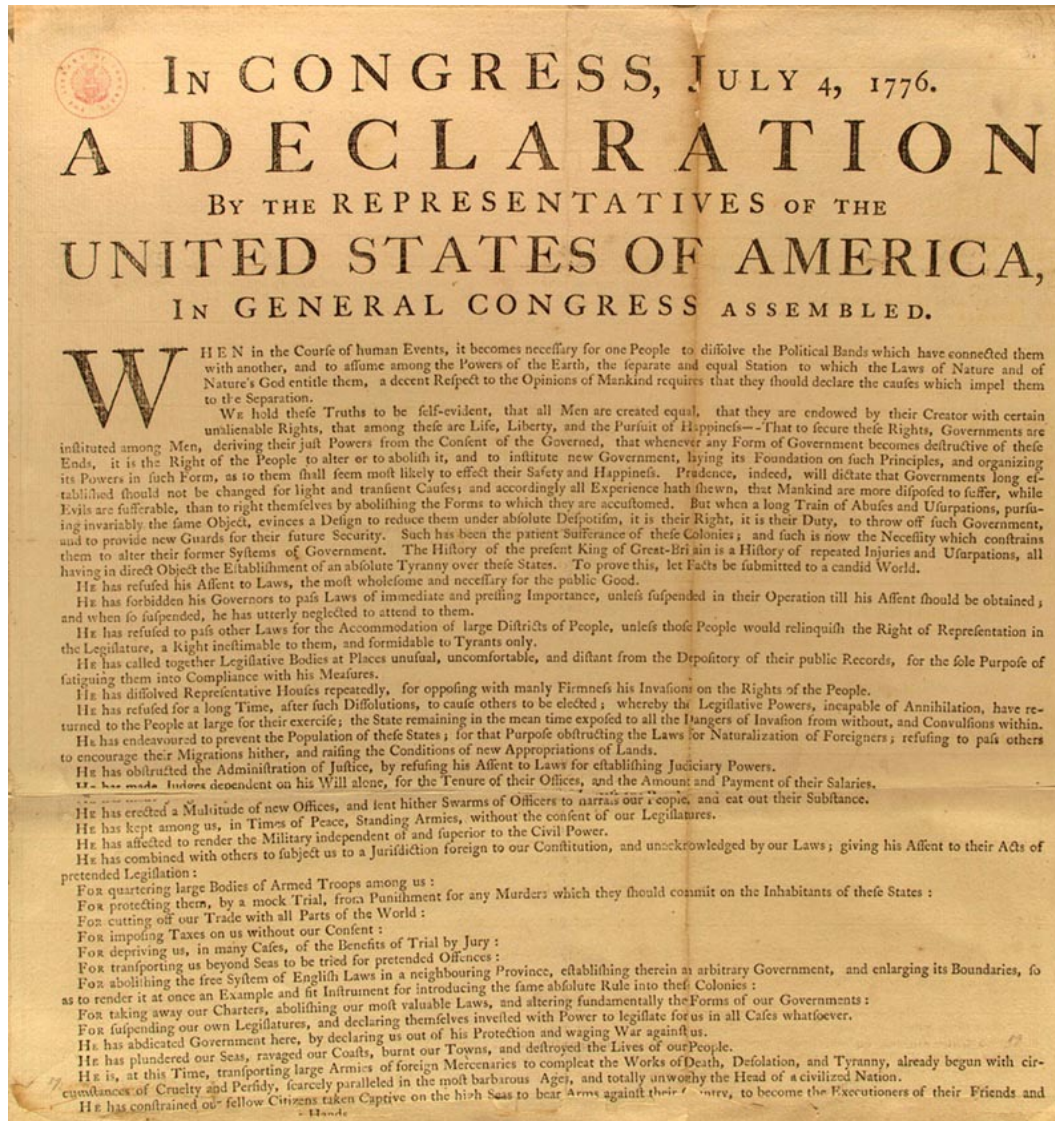


The Declaration of Independence





John Locke and Enlightenment Thinking

- Social Contract Theory
 - Wanted to provide an alternative to the view “that all government in the world is merely the product of force and violence, and that men live together by no other rules than that of the beasts, where the strongest carries it..”
 - For Locke, legitimate government instituted by the explicit consent of those governed.
 - Citizens of a legitimate government transfer to the government their right of executing the law of nature and judging their own case.

Legitimate vs. Illegitimate Governments

- Aims of a Legitimate Government:
 - To preserve, so far as possible, the rights to life, liberty, health and property of its citizens.
 - To punish those of its citizens who violate the rights of others.
 - To pursue the public good even where this may conflict with the rights of individuals.
- Benefits of a Legitimate, Civil Government
 - Provides something unavailable in the state of nature: an impartial judge to determine the severity of the crime and to set a punishment proportionate to the crime.

Right to Revolution

- Follows from making the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate civil governments.
- A legitimate civil government seeks to preserve the life, health, liberty and property of its subjects, insofar as this is compatible with the public good. Thus, it deserves obedience.
- An illegitimate civil government seeks to systematically violate the natural rights of its subjects.





Political Background

- In June of 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a committee of 5 delegates from different colonies to draft a declaration of independence.
- Jefferson given the job of preparing the first draft because of what John Adams called his “peculiar felicity of expression.”

Changes Made in the Draft

A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.

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 station to~~
assume among the powers of the earth the ^{separate and equal} ~~station to~~
which the laws of nature & 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~~ ^{the} separation.

We hold these truths to be ^{self-evident,} ~~that~~ ~~all~~ ~~men~~ ~~are~~ ~~born~~ ~~free~~ ~~and~~ ~~equal~~, that all men as
created equal & independent that ^{they are endowed by their creator with} ~~from~~ ~~that~~ ~~equal~~ ~~creation~~ ~~they~~ ~~derive~~
~~their~~ ~~rights~~ ~~from~~ ~~their~~ ~~creator~~ ~~that~~ ~~among~~ ~~these~~ ~~rights~~ ~~are~~ ~~life~~ ~~liberty~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~pursuit~~ ~~of~~ ~~happiness~~; that to secure these ^{rights} ~~rights~~, go-
vernments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from
the consent of the governed.

From Jefferson's Autobiography

- “The pusillanimous idea that we had friends in England worth keeping terms with, still haunted the minds of many. For this reason, those passages which conveyed censure on the people of England were struck out lest they should give them offense.”
- “The clause, too, reprobating the enslaving the inhabitants of Africa, was struck out in complaisance to South Carolina and Georgia, who had never attempted to restrain the importation of slaves, and who, on the contrary, still wished to continue it. Our northern brethren also, I believe, felt a little tender under those censures; for though their people had very few slaves themselves, yet they had been pretty considerable carriers of them to others.”