

The Day We Declared Independence

Sunday, July 4th, 2010 by Jason Riddle



Each year on July 4th, we commemorate one of mankind's greatest achievements – The Declaration of Independence. The [unanimous Declaration of Independence by the Congress of the thirteen united States of America](#) was an act of consummate intellectual courage that delivered free States from the tyrannical shackles of an illegitimate and oppressive Government. The signers of the Declaration staked their entire fortunes and their lives on a single principled message. Much more than simply declaring independence from Great Britain, these men declared independence from the tribal philosophy of the Old World and gave birth to a new nation founded on the principle of individual human rights – the inalienable rights of *Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*.

The history of mankind has endured thousands of years of oppression, exploitation, and stagnation. People existed as subjects to slavery and serfdom. The sacrifice of the individual to the King, Church, or State was morally praised as dutiful, noble, and virtuous. Intellectual and economic progress was slow to nonexistent. Mankind shuffled along in the darkness of irrational default – an automatic, animal-like consciousness – moored by primitive philosophy.

To date, the American Founding Fathers have come the closest to freeing the world from this ancient, barbaric philosophy by declaring that all people live by right - certain inalienable rights that no man or Government can deny. In less than one hundred years after declaring our independence from the crude philosophy of dutiful sacrifice, we witnessed non-violent transfers of power, eliminated slavery, and enjoyed the greatest proportional increase in standard of living of any society in the history of the world.

To paraphrase one of the great philosophers of the 20th century - the principle of individual human rights is still so new to the history of mankind that few people have yet to fully grasp it. 234 years ago we declared our independence, but the primitive philosophy of collectivism and sacrifice is still rooted deep in our culture. If, and only if, we understand individual human rights, can we truly declare independence!

- *“I can say — not as a patriotic bromide, but with full knowledge of the necessary metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, political, and aesthetic roots — that the United States of America is the greatest, the noblest and, in its original founding principles, the only moral country in the history of the world.” - Ayn Rand*

I wish all of you a safe and happy Independence Day! I also hope that we all remember to take time in between the cookout and fireworks to remember the great men and women who have made the things we enjoy (and all too often take for granted) even possible. Share the message of liberty with your friends and loved ones. It serves us well to take some time to remember exactly what we are celebrating each summer. Here are a few key lessons we can learn from the Declaration of Independence:

1) All People Live by Right

"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."

Whether or not you believe in God, the nature of the human being and the human condition identifies the unalienable right to life for all people (nobody else can live for you). All people have the right to liberty (nobody else can form your thoughts or control your actions but you). All people have the right to use their life and liberty to pursue their own goals of happiness (nobody else can pursue your goals for you).

A right is freedom to act, freedom from coercion. Notice that the rights listed by the Declaration's author, Thomas Jefferson, do not require action by anyone else. Rights are not a positive obligation or an infringement on the rights of another.

The opposite of living by right is living by permission. Is the purpose of your life to live by the permission of a society or Government?

Anyone who believes it is acceptable to use **force** to make one person provide any good or service (be it luxury entitlements or minimum life necessities) to another person is operating by the same philosophical principle that condones slavery. The initiation of force and the principle of liberty are incompatible. Period.

2) Governments Don't Make the Rules, People Do:

The only power to which Government is permitted comes from the *consent of the governed*. Government has no right to take any action unless explicitly granted to it by the people who employ its services. Government can only function and operate to the extent that people allow.

The only function of Government is to secure the rights of its individual citizens. If Government fails in its only legitimate function, it is not only the right, but the duty of the people to *"...dissolve the political bands which have connected them"*:

- *"That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it....it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."*

The idea that individuals live by right and that Government operates by permission was so important to the Founding Fathers that it was later included in the Bill of Rights amendments to the United States Constitution:

- **9th Amendment:** *The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.*
- **10th Amendment:** *The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.*

The following is an excerpt from the introduction of **The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, JULY 4, 1776:**

“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.

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. — 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. — 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...”

[...click here for the entire Declaration of Independence.](#)

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