

APRIL 26, 2020

## ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL

*“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.”*  
[2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of our Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776.]

Bold words. Beautiful words. And words unfortunately and deliberately misunderstood, extended beyond their intentions, and used to criticize elements not within these simple words. All men are created equal, but does this mean all men ARE equal? Perhaps equal under the law? Perhaps only white males are equal? No, None, Neither.... Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness, but does this literally mean all men (and women) are to be provided the *same* life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness if somehow the inequalities or inequities are made to be *equal*?

While debated and attempted to be ‘equalized by law’, the truth and intent is traced to the origin of thought; the evolution of the words.

An origin is John Locke (1623-1704). In various documents, including ‘Treaties of Civil Government’, Locke used terms like ‘*life, liberty and estate*’ and other times extended the phrase as ‘*life, health, liberty and possessions*’.

*The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions... (and) when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not, unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another . [Treaties of Civil Government, John Locke.]*

His intention is all mankind are equal, independent and respectful of others’ rights. An important aspect is these rights are endowed from *law of nature* and God, and universally self-evident through human reason. The first paragraph of our Declaration of Independence states *laws of Nature and of Nature’s God* entitles us this power and respect, thus our right to separate ourselves from a despot that attempted to squelch our equal and independent. Clearly equal is neither infringed by nor associated with the eyes of the law, purview of a government, or in number of possessions. Compounded with the word *independent*, Locke argues all mankind are equal and independent in their journey in life; chart their own course as long as not transgression of others’ rights to their journey. The earliest origin parallels a reciprocal and Golden Rule, Matthew 7:12, *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.*

This principle logic was adopted by Thomas Paine (1737-1809), the author of the best seller pamphlet 'Common Sense' in January 1776. Paine used the principle to justify and fuel our thirst for liberty against a dictator that declared war against our natural rights.

*The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested. The laying a Country desolate with Fire and Sword, declaring War against the natural rights of all Mankind, and extirpating the Defenders thereof from the Face of the Earth, is the Concern of every Man to whom Nature hath given the Power of feeling... As the exalting one an so greatly above the rest cannot be justified on the equal rights of nature, so neither can it be defended on the authority of scripture; for the will of the Almighty, as declared by Gideon and the prophet Samuel, expressly disapproves of government by kings [Common Sense, Thomas Paine]*

*Natural rights are those which appertain to man in right of his existence. Of this kind are the intellectual rights, or rights of the mind and also tall those rights of acting as an individual for his own comfort and happiness, which are not injurious to the natural rights of others. [Rights of Man, Thomas Paine]*

Thomas Paine was a spirited writer, stirring the soul of new land to become a free and independent nation principled in *natural rights*. He challenged the authority of one man exalted among all others, a contradiction to a philosophy that all mankind are equal. Later he penned natural rights are man's right to exist, and rights as individual in pursuit of his own comfort and happiness. Paine and Locke are identical in the thought; that mankind is endowed with natural rights, individually, to pursue their right to exist, to pursue their dreams and only bounded to not infringe others' rights. This is the seed that grew our American dream, our individual dreams.

Many well-read members of the colonies subscribed to these principles. While true these individuals were men, white and some slave holders; the language intentions were not precluding, excluding, or addressing any particular exceptions. Notwithstanding a few individuals' held beliefs, as a unanimous committee any inferior individual's opinion would have been rejected. Any attempt to find meaning to the contrary is an exploration into fiction and not reality. American failure was recognition and act upon this unconstrained principle but not a failure in these magnificent words. Our founders struggled with the exact language as a Declaration rather than Governance.

The First Continental Congress addressed these rights in the Declaration of Resolve.

*Resolved, N. C. D. 1. That they are entitled to life, liberty, and property, and they have never ceded to any sovereign power whatever a right to dispose of either without their consent. Resolved, N.C.D. 2. That our ancestors, who first settled these colonies, were at the time of their emigration from the mother country, entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free and natural- born subjects, within the realm of England. [Declaration of Resolve, Oct 14, 1774]*

[N.C.D is Latin for nemine contradente. With nobody contradicting.]

While these founders wrote eloquently, versus a clear and straight language, they rejected a power of a Monarchy over their lives in a new land however still desired acknowledgement of their rights as British subjects (in representative governance). The angered Continental Congress needed to send a strong objection to Britain's Intolerable Acts after the infamous Tea Parties, but desired a balance in hopes of some reconciliation. Their redress in the Declaration of Resolve is, unfortunately, illogical to the basic philosophy without separating their natural right and / from governance.

After Common Sense was published in January 1776, several historical declarations were published with this natural right theme prior to the Declaration of Independence. South Carolina formed their separate governing constitution in March 1776. Once established, the South Carolina Grand Jury, chaired by Henry Felder, confirmed South Carolina's right to form their independent governance framed under these right.

*Whilst engaged in an arduous but glorious Struggle for the preservation of those invaluable Rights and Liberties, which, by the Laws of Reason, and of Nature, all men have a right to possess, and without the Possession of which Life itself would be a Burthen. [Address and Declaration (upon South Carolina's new Constitution), Henry Felder 20 May 1776]*

Although the origin and date are questioned, a year earlier the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence provided parallel language.

*That whosoever directly or indirectly abetted or in any way form or manner countenanced the unchartered and dangerous invasion of our rights as claimed by Great Britain is an enemy to this country to America and to the inherent and inalienable rights of man. [Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, 20 May 1775]*

[South Carolina Gazette and Country, 13 June 1775 announced the Mecklenburg Resolves, a shorter statement declaring the state of actual rebellion. The specific Resolves declared and text was lost in fire in 1800 and recounted by memory. The text first published in the Raleigh Register, 1819.]

As a more well-known document, George Mason used similar language in Virginia's Declaration of Rights a month after the Orangeburgh Declaration.

*That all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety. [Virginia Declaration of Rights, 12 June 1776]*

History states that Thomas Jefferson relied heavily on his fellow Virginians' declaration in crafting his original draft of the Declaration of Independence.

*We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable; that all men are created equal & independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable,*

*among which are the preservation of life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness [Original draft, Thomas Jefferson June 1776]*

Among several changes by the other committee members, Benjamin Franklin is credited with changing ‘sacred and un-deniable’ to ‘self-evident’. While other parts of the draft spoke of slavery, which was deleted in committee; the final simple words within the second paragraph meant what the words state without any reservation:

*“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.”*  
*[Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776.]*

The words speak to natural rights and individuals, not of a government. Individuals have these rights to pursuit their own opportunities, talents and desires. The founders never meant equal in class, equal in abilities, equal in color or sex, equal in health or beliefs, or any other attribute many argue the government should ‘set right and equal’. To the contrary, this is why American is limitless in greatness; this greatness is derived by the unlimited individuals and their dreams. The intentions are that all mankind have God-endowed *natural rights* and not government; instead, the government only exists to ensure these rights are not infringed. And as they are God-given, neither monarch nor collective government may trespass these rights.

Fearless Forward my patriots ~~

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