

The Documents of Liberty

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Benjamin Franklin once stated, "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." This famous quote conveys the message that a successful society will always hold liberty in the highest regard and be ever vigilant of anything which intends to compromise or seize that liberty. Liberty, by definition, is the freedom from arbitrary, totalitarian governmental control. It is one of the most crucial and famous American ideals which this country was founded upon. This principle of liberty creates a basis for the legal system and the historical documents under which the government operates. As such, there is evident commonality among the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Together, they memorialize the American ideology as they protect the sworn liberty of the nation among their own domains.

The Declaration of Independence was a document written by Thomas Jefferson and adopted by the Continental Congress in July of 1776 to signify the unity among the colonies in North America in their demand for freedom from British rule. This document addresses the reasoning behind the colonists' pursuit of freedom citing that, "that all men are created *equal*, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights" and, "That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government." This statement is an explanation of American beliefs and ideals which unite, justify, and motivate the people to fight to become a free nation by simultaneously functioning as a declaration of war, thus becoming a catalyst for the Revolutionary War. This bill contains doctrines that also foster the idea, as stated in the document, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." This important belief, as introduced in the constitution, remains an important ideal in history made even more famous for its use in arguments against slavery and for its use in defending and securing the civil rights of all people no matter their race or religious belief. Lastly, this declaration serves to introduce the theory that the government derives its power from the people, and with aforementioned right of the people in the excerpt above, the people must form their own government, one that does not seek to seize their inalienable rights as humans, but instead protects these rights.

The Constitution, drawn up in 1787 by the founding fathers, is a document providing a list of principles on which this new nation was to run and illustrating a plan for federal and state government. It additionally provides the framework for the administration and government versus only the ideology the country was founded upon. This document elucidates the division of power into three branches into the legislative, executive, and judicial branches to govern the nation. The Constitution also introduces the unique system of checks and balances by which these branches are regulated to prevent anyone branch from gaining exorbitant amounts of power over the nation. Unique, too, is the analytic design of the document which allows for modification, leaving room for a perpetually growing and altering nation. Unlike many legal, federal, and political documents of its time, a time of monarchs, the Constitution contains regulations and restrictions delegated toward the governing body of America instead of its citizens. It is a document aimed to reserve the rights of citizens rather than the rights of the government.

As historical documents under which the country is operated and which contain crucial American ideology, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are connected with a

proverbial common thread, despite much contrast. It first becomes expressly apparent in the recurrence of the theory that the government should not hold arbitrary, totalitarian, unsupervised jurisdiction over its citizens, playing into the classic, aforementioned American liberty ideal. Also in the spirit of American liberty is the idealization of the notion of a government in which power is held and delegated by the people instead of the government, a stark contrast again to many national governments of the colonial period which usually included one solitary head of state. Additionally, they both foster the concept of the establishment of a nation free from the rulings of the British monarchy, These statutes were created by the founding fathers to guide the nation. These bills contain doctrines that not only embody the ideals of equality and liberty that the nation was founded upon, but they are emblematic of the meaning of America.

The Bill of Rights, a document of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, was drafted in 1791 by James Madison. This bill is one of the most essential documents in American history and lies at the heart of the American governmental policies. Unlike the two aforementioned documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the Bill of Rights specifies the exclusive rights owed to American citizens by the government. Furthermore, evidence of the specification is clearly depicted in the first amendment of the bill, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." This amendment not only serves as proof that the government is obligated to protect these specific rights, but it introduces the important notion of the separation of church and state, an idea particularly novel for a government to adopt during the time of sovereignties. This concept is another important American ideal that has held a role in shaping this country. Another important concept that this bill introduces and bolsters is the notion of "innocent until proven guilty" as stated in the fifth amendment, "No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury." This idea, too, was unique compared to a majority of other countries' "guilty until proven innocent" approach. Differentiating itself from the rest of the Constitution, this historical document addresses the people of the nation versus the administrative construction of the government. This embodiment of American beliefs aims to protect the rights of citizens rather than those of the government, a recurring trend in many of early America's documentation for the founding of its government.

The documents, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, also display much commonality between them regarding the fact that they are both crucial documents that lay the very foundation for the American legal system. Evidence of this commonality first becomes pronounced in the unflagging occurrence of the theme elucidating blatant restraints on the power of the government, reserving, and protecting civilian rights and freedoms. While it was a persistent concept in American political policies, it was far from commonplace during the colonial era of the reign of sovereigns in which America became an establish nation. Thus, these bills both established legalities which would prevent the government from gaining arbitrary control over the citizens and the functioning of the country. Another similarity between the two bills that can not accurately be observed about the Declaration of Independence is the fact that both documents were established after the achievement of liberty from Britain and were intended to unite and reconstruct the newly freed colonies into a strong nation,

The Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights additionally mirror certain frequencies in the meanings of their respective texts. As these documents are a crucial part in the formation of American governmental guidelines they both foster crucial ideals of human dignity.

In forming a successful nation, one of the highest priorities was to maintain the wellbeing of the citizen as clearly cited in the excerpt of the Declaration of Independence, "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." This perception that every human being was entitled to have his or her chance at success if they strove and work vigorously toward it fueled the idea of the American Dream which drove immigrants of every nationality and financial stature to migrate to America. Another recurrence in the text of these bills is the theory of inalienable rights, that each citizen is endowed by God or nature with exclusive rights as a human being and the government must respect and protect these rights as stated in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights," and in the Bill of Rights where these inalienable rights are specified and protect as cited in the ninth amendment, "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." This concept has a profound influence on the structure and laws of the American government. These documents also bear resemblance to each other in their conspicuous acknowledgement of the right of the people to monitor and if necessary revolutionize the government if it has indeed jeopardized these aforementioned inalienable rights as addressed in the Declaration of Independence, "That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a 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."

The documents, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, all depict correlative ideals, concepts, and basic principles under which the government operates. They contain the doctrines which create a strong basis for America's legal system and governing body. They lay the very guidelines for the operation of the nation and provide a strict stance on how American citizens are to be valued by the government. These remarkable documents have withstood the test of time and retain the same level of regulative power over the nation's legal system as they held in the eighteenth century, over two hundred years ago. Another commonality between these legal documents is the actuality that they are highly revered documents credited for laying the basis of the entire American nation which are studied by all citizens as a part of their heritage and American history. These documents all contain crucial American ideals which make America the land of liberty.

The evident commonality between the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights is ever present as they protect the liberty concept an ideology of the nation. These documents which can be perceived as the proverbial building blocks of America lay the basis for the entire government as they protect the rights of the people. These bills all introduce important ideals which were evident in their respective roles in forming a country of liberty for its people. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights can all undeniably be credited with defining a nation of freedom, liberty, and independence.

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