

Handout F: Declaration of Independence – Draft and Final Versions

The Declaration of Independence, 1776

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...

1. According to this document, what is the purpose of government?

Draft Declaration of Independence, 1776

Note: This section of Thomas Jefferson's original draft Declaration of Independence was deleted by the Continental Congress.

He [the British King] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither...Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce.

1. With what does Jefferson charge the English King?
2. How does this deleted paragraph inform the meaning of “all men” in the final Declaration of Independence?