

John Locke's Influence on the Declaration of Independence

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The Declaration of Independence

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**. - Excerpt from the U.S. Declaration of Independence

MEN being, as has been said, **by nature**, [are] **all free, equal, and independent**, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his **own consent**. The only way whereby any one **divests himself of his natural liberty**, and puts on the bonds of civil society, **is by agreeing** with other men to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a **secure enjoyment of their properties**, and a greater security against any, that are not of it. -- Locke's 2nd Treatise on Civil Government: (Sec. 95)

People “**join in society** with others, ... for the **mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates**, which I call by the general name, **property**. The great and **chief end**, therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the **preservation of their property**.” -- Locke's 2nd Treatise on Civil Government

The **reason why men enter into society**, is the **preservation of their property**; and the end why they chuse and authorize a legislative, is, that there may be laws made, and rules set, as **guards and fences to the properties** of all the members of the society...

...**whenever the legislators endeavour to take away, and destroy the property of the people**, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they put themselves into a **state of war with the people**, who are thereupon **absolved from any farther obedience**, and are left to the common refuge, which God hath provided for all men, against force and violence. -- Locke's 2nd Treatise on Civil Government

Missouri Constitution – Article I, Section 2

That all constitutional government is intended to promote the **general welfare** of the people; that all persons have a **natural right** to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and the enjoyment of the gains of their own industry; that all persons are created equal and are entitled to equal rights and opportunity under the law; that **to give security to these things is the principal office of government**, and that when government does not confer this security, it **fails in its chief design**.

"Our citizens have wisely formed themselves into **one nation** as to others and **several States** as among themselves. To the **united nation** belong our **external** and mutual relations; to **each State**, severally, the **care of our persons, our property, our reputation and religious freedom**." -- Thomas Jefferson: To Rhode Island Assembly, 1801