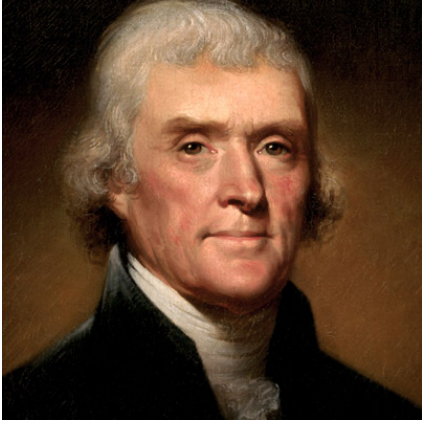


We Hold These Truths



Thomas Jefferson was born on April 13, 1743, in Shadwell, Virginia. He was a draftsman of the U.S. Declaration of Independence; the nation's first secretary of state (1789-94); second vice president (1797-1801); and, as the third president (1801-09), the statesman responsible for the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson died in bed at Monticello (located near Charlottesville, Virginia) on July 4, 1826.

To the task of composing the American Declaration of Independence from England, Benjamin Franklin, the internationally respected senior member of the Continental Congress, quickly declined, stating, "I make it a policy never to write documents subject to editing by others." John Adams, the seasoned and experienced politician, was then called upon. Adams said, "There are three reasons why I should not accept this honor: first, I am disliked and obnoxious, so the document would lack credibility; second, it should be written by a Virginian; and third, Thomas Jefferson is ten times a better writer than I." The daunting task then came to the 33 year old Jefferson, who composed the draft in 1776 over a 17 day period in a hotel room in Philadelphia. Among the activities which helped focus and inspire his mind and words during this period was music - the playing of his violin.

Jefferson said the object of the Declaration was "not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take. Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion."

The words of the American Declaration of Independence that modern Americans most embrace, are found in the preamble, and set in **We Hold These Truths**: "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 inalienable 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." Thomas Jefferson