

Claiming rights



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In what different ways does the idea of “ rights” find expression in these documents? These documents show us that the idea of “ rights” can be expressed in many manners, specifically to these three documents, “ The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” of 1789, from the French people as a National Assembly. Although number four on the list of the document being read, it is my belief that this point explains what the French are wanting.

“ Liberty consists in the ability to do whatever does not harm another; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no other limits than those which assure to other members of society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by the law. ” (Strayer) “ The Jamaica Letter” of 1815 by Simon Bolivar although that same thought of equal or “ natural” rights as in the French comes to mind, Bolivar and his people were caught between a rock and a hard place being born in America they were considered Americans sometimes of mixed breed with the rights of Europeans.

“ Europeans, but a race halfway between the legitimate owners of the land and Spanish usurpers—in short, being Americans by birth and endowed with rights from Europe. ” (Strayer) But all these “ Americans” wanted was to be left to be Americans, to be separate from Europe and to be left to live without Native persecution. Frederick Douglass’s “ What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July” of 1852 is a stronger and more deeply felt speech because this case of “ rights” was not about “ natural” or equal rights, it was not about wanting to be left alone but instead it was about freedom.

Free to be a man, a woman, a human and not considered a property or commodity to barter, trade or sell. “ To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery;” (Strayer) Douglass, in his speech, threw all that the whites there were celebrating of the 4th of July in there face and showed them that they were doing the same and or worse to black slaves.

Which documents speak more about individual rights, and which focus attention on collective rights? From the three documents chosen “ The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” speaks more about individual rights. As per my opinion, the French were already free they just wanted equal rights to those of Social distinctions. They were looking to be allowed to do some of the same things. “ These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.” (Strayer)

This French document reminds me of the equal civil rights that blacks were looking for in the mid 60’s. The other documents, I feel, focus attention more on the collective rights of the people, of blacks being freed from slavery as a whole, “ Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? That he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? ” (Strayer) The “ Americans” wanted to be free, as a whole, from the Europeans, independence was there focus.

In Bolivar’s document he says, “ From the beginning we were plagued by a practice that in addition to depriving us of the rights to which we were entitled left us in a kind of permanent infancy with respect to public affairs. ”

(Strayer) The freedom or independence that Bolivar was talking and asking for was the same that the thirteen colonies were looking for from the British Empire in 1776. What common understandings among them can you identify?

Some common understandings among these documents that I can identify are similarities in seeking some type of freedom from oppression, independence, and equal civil rights. All these documents explain that these groups or people followed an agenda towards an attainable goal for the survival of their people with a life or death conclusion. These documents have left an imprint and lesson in history of the perseverance of man towards the goal of freedom and civil rights. We can actually follow history till this day and see that examples left from those men and women who stood up for the oppressed and violated.