

# Jefferson davis on pursuit for happiness



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Thomas Jefferson's "Pursuit of Happiness" Thomas Jefferson's quote "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" has been interpreted various ways, but one meaning stands out. An individual can have life and liberty, but humans tend to pursue happiness their whole lives with no guarantees. Jefferson knew that a democratic government could protect a citizen's life and give them liberty, but could never make an individual happy. The pursuit of happiness was the citizen's job, not the government. A new government could only give citizens the right to pursue their individual goals and ideals in the search for happiness.

Thomas Jefferson described life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as "inherent" and "inalienable", or in other words, natural and undeniable rights (Jefferson and Peterson, 7). Jefferson wanted the Thirteen Colonies to form a government that protected the right of life. At the time this meant protecting citizens of the Colonies from war and Native Americans, but has come to mean much more. Americans have the right to procreate or not. Individuals are not limited to how many children they have like in China. Life is not terminated for lack of funding, like in Nazi Germany. The United States protects American lives worldwide from Jefferson's time up until today. The second natural or undeniable right was liberty. Liberty is sometimes confused with freedom. True freedom is anarchy, because everyone does what they want. Liberty is the freedom to have the same opportunities as everyone else, obey natural laws. An example would be the freedom to worship God, Allah, or Jehovah anyway a person feels the need to. Jefferson spoke "of liberty to worship our Creator in the way we think is most agreeable to his will" (Jefferson and Peterson, 19).

Liberty means equality for everyone. At the time Jefferson wrote the

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Declaration of Independence, he owned slaves. This contradicted his position on equal opportunity for everyone. When he spoke of liberty, Jefferson meant white men. Jefferson knew that the democracy he was fighting for was far from perfect, but could become better by always changing. Jefferson stated, “‘The price of freedom,’ as Thomas Jefferson observed, ‘ is eternal vigilance’” (Washburne). Through eternal vigilance, the United States has more liberty today than in Jefferson’s day.

Natural laws are laws that come natural to humans. Most individuals think thievery, murder, rape, and torture is wrong. On the other hand, most individuals believe taking care of children, labor, and contributing to the community are right. Natural laws are general, because not all men follow every law, even natural ones.

If the new government, the United States of American, can provide life and liberty, than the pursuit of happiness can sought by Americans. Every individual searches for happiness at one time or another in their life. One author suggests, “ At any given moment in a day, the events of that day, and the attitudes and predispositions of the people living in it, will lead to varying degrees of individual happiness” (Washburne). This could mean one neighbor can find happiness easily, while another cannot. However, despite how happy or unhappy an individual becomes, America allows them to try and become happier. This is an American’s natural and undeniable right. Life and liberty must be provided from a government, before the pursuit of happiness can be achieved. The American government allows citizens to live and be free to pursue their goals, dreams, and hopes of happiness. Jefferson would be proud of what America has become.

#### Works Cited

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