

Thomas jefferson the plagiarist



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, is one of the most popular documents in the world. Although Jefferson is one of the United States' founding fathers and is one of the biggest reasons that the United States is the way it is today, he did not want to be remembered for his presidency but for what he accomplished, such as writing the Declaration of Independence and founding the University of Virginia . Except, Jefferson has been accused from plagiarizing multiple parts of the Declaration of Independence.

It is said that Jefferson has taken direct quotes from other writers' works without giving them any credit for the information that he used. One can tell after reading different journals, newspaper articles, and important documents that Jefferson plagiarized the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson plagiarized multiple ideas from John Locke. John Locke was an English philosopher that wrote the Second Treatise of Government. Locke wrote the Second Treatise of Government for similar reasons that Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. Locke believed that God made all people naturally subject to a monarch. Locke wanted all people to equal.

Although this was a popular opinion around, Jefferson decided to take almost word for word from the Second Treatise of Government. Locke says that everyone has a right to life, liberty, and property, whilst Jefferson writes about how all men are equal, that they are endowed by their greater with certain unalienable rights. This means life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The only bit of information that was changed in these two sentences is the pursuit of happiness . Jefferson's words only differed from Locke's because he thought owning property was not the only thing that

could make people happy. Jefferson was accused by Richard Henry Lee that he plagiarized Locke's Second Treatise of Government. Jefferson considered the part that he copied from Locke's document to be the best part of the Declaration of Independence. He said that The object of the Declaration of Independence was not to find out new principles neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment.

Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence to be an expression of the American mind. Although Jefferson did say he wanted to take opinions and thoughts from all around, he never gave credit to the people that he took the ideas from. It is clearly shown that these words were Locke's and not Jefferson's because Locke's Second Treatise of Government was written in 1690, 86 years prior . The Declaration of Independence states that we have unalienable rights. These rights were also stolen from an Enlightenment philosopher named Francis Hutcheson. Francis Hutcheson's idea of rights to our life challenge the ideas of Locke. Hutcheson is the one who says that our rights are natural, unalienable, and inherent to our being as humans. In 1755, Hutcheson wrote the System of Moral Philosophy. Hutcheson challenged Locke's idea about how Locke thought of our rights in the wrong way . Jefferson took information away from this argument and included it in the Declaration of Independence. This is, again, another reason why Jefferson changed life, liberty, and property, to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Although Jefferson obviously agreed with Locke's ideas, Hutcheson challenging his ideas encouraged Jefferson to change the word property to the word happiness .

Thomas Jefferson plagiarized from George Mason in multiple ways. George Mason wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights. This was later published in the Pennsylvania Gazette, on June 12, 1776 which was days before Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson stole some of Mason's main ideas and phrases. There is said to be a direct influence from Mason's work. Mason wrote that All men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent natural rights. Jefferson writes similar words saying that everyone has unalienable rights and that all men are created equal. He says, 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. These are almost the exact same ideas. This is perfect evidence that Thomas Jefferson plagiarized the Declaration of Independence from Mason's ideas and exact words.

Thomas Jefferson has also been accused of stealing ideas from the Articles of Confederation. Jefferson wanted a government with a loose federalist idea which was very close to the idea of the Articles of Confederation. Jefferson's limitations on federal power was based on the states' and individual rights. People were concerned that Jefferson was focusing more on states' rights more than individual persons' rights. When Jefferson was questioned on this part of the Declaration of Independence he would track it back to the Articles of Confederation and it is said that he was inspired from this document because it had points that should have been covered . This would not have been plagiarism if Jefferson had just given credit to the main authors of the documents. This is proof that Jefferson stole ideas from different documents.

One year before Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, people from the county of Mecklenburg had written a Declaration of Independence for themselves. Jefferson read the document and happened to think that this document was bogus and that was illegitimate; yet there seems to be very similar ideas that are in the Declaration of Independence. The Mecklenburg Declaration declares themselves free and independent people . Another similarity between the two is the idea of God given rights . Again, this is almost the exact same idea as Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and although there are no direct quotes from this document there are many similarities between the two documents.

Thomas Jefferson again has stolen ideas from another important document. Jefferson copies many ideas from the Magna Carta to write the Declaration of Independence. He easily took from this document because both documents were written to give justice to citizens by focusing more on their rights and freeing people from unfair rule . The Declaration of Independence says, He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States, and for imposing taxes on us without our consent. Although Jefferson did not copy the exact words from the Magna Carta, the main idea is there and made it easier for him to write the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson defended himself when philosophers accused him of plagiarizing from their journals and works. He says that his intention was not to steal from their work. He intended to take ideas from the American mind and include it into the Declaration of Independence . Jefferson wanted the

people to agree with the terms that are included, so he took from other popular works so that the Declaration of Independence was not just his opinion. These examples show that Thomas Jefferson plagiarized the Declaration of Independence.

The argument whether Thomas Jefferson plagiarized the Declaration of Independence or whether he came up with all of its ideas on his own is still going on and on today. Although there are many examples to prove that Jefferson has stolen or copied from other peoples' works it is also clear that it was not his intention. What he thought were good ideas and would help the democracy grow, he put into the Declaration of Independence . Thomas Jefferson's idea to take from other peoples' works was somewhat selfish but at the same time incredibly smart. The people wanted equality and they wanted to be listened to and heard, so Jefferson took from the peoples' works so their ideas would be in the Declaration of Independence. All Jefferson had to do was to give the true authors credit and the Declaration of Independence would not be plagiarized. One can clearly tell that although Thomas Jefferson plagiarized from other peoples' works, he did it for the wellbeing of the United States of America.