

# Development of the american experience, thomas jefferson

[Politics](#), [President](#)



This passage is found on page 136, left column, fourth paragraph. This passage is used by Thomas Jefferson to argue on the necessity of establishing a government to replace the old structure of governance erected and maintained by the British crown. The passage establishes the basis for the dissolution of the American people's "political bands" (Jefferson 136) and affiliation with Great Britain by stating that although changes in the government should never be taken lightly, it is unfortunate that many people are likely to prefer and even tolerate the wrongdoings and evil deeds promoted in the existing system for the sake of familiarity.

In general, people are afraid of the disruption brought about by systemic changes because they are afraid of uncertainty. However, they have to realize that it is their right to initiate changes in terms of government when there is enough reason to do so, such as wanton abuse of power of leaders or corrupt practices or "whenever any form of government becomes destructive" or poses a hindrance to the achievement of human rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." (Jefferson 136)

Jefferson observes that the prevailing conditions under the governance of the "present king of Great Britain" points to such circumstance of "injuries and usurpations" (Jefferson 137) which have severely impeded the political and social life of the American people. Clearly, Jefferson uses this line of argument to convince the people of the morality of self-governance and of declaring independence vis-a-vis the state of being enslaved and virtually dependent on the British for political, social, and economic sustenance.

By acknowledging the doubts and difficulties that surround the decision to break the ties with the long time British ruler, Jefferson and his followers wanted to arouse a sense of righteous anger in the face of the historical abuses committed by the king and his government. For instance, he reminds his audience of how the British king has “plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, & destroyed the lives of our people.” (138)

In effect, Jefferson encourages his audience to rise up against the tyrannical form of government imposed by a foreign ruler through the systematic use of violence and violation of human rights. In bringing up the general hesitance of the populace, Jefferson mocks and prods them into recognizing the validity of separation and of establishing their own government as a last resort in the face of the continued refusal of the British king to petitions for redress. (139)

It is evident from Jefferson's “The Declaration of Independence” that the need to form an independent government is made inevitable in order to protect the inherent rights of the American people from another government which is exploitative and tyrannical. Undoubtedly, it is through this concept of tyranny in governance that societies are able to form their own distinct ideas of what a government or the state of social relations should be like.

Thomas Jefferson would later expound on the meaning of tyranny through religious bigotry and intolerance when he proposes the passage of an act to establish religious freedom as a human right. (141) The necessity of enacting legislation to prevent religious tyranny, which presupposes the superiority of a single religion over others and promotes the propagation of religion through coercion and imposition of religious ideas and opinions over others,

shows that the government functions as a regulatory mechanism for guaranteeing human rights, including ensuring that one's human right does not deprive another of his or her rights.

Thomas Paine argues, for instance, that "government, even in its best state, is a necessary evil" (133) to demonstrate that government only becomes a social necessity when the members of society have become too corrupted and too selfish so that they must be forced to acknowledge and perform their obligations toward others in order to experience peace and security, or when the people experience misery because of the intrusion of the government of another people.

In many ways, both Jefferson and Paine's conception of the role and relevance of the government as a social institution bears resemblance to the concepts explored by Rosseau in his thesis on the Social Contract, wherein he traces the historical roots of the birth of societies and governments, and describes the ideal relationship between the government and the people or the sovereign. Like Rosseau, Jefferson and Paine condemns the impulse towards tyranny that promotes the clash between the minority and majority interest, as represented by the tendency of the few to promote their selfish interests at the expense of others.

This is exemplified in Jefferson and Paine's account of the American experience under British rule, wherein both authors find the American people fully justified in announcing separation and in establishing "a government of our own" as "our natural right." (Paine 135) Rosseau's influence on the conception of nationalism on American thinkers such as Jefferson and Paine

is also evident in the concepts of territory and the boundaries of private and social property that the authors use to justify the call to revolt against British colonization.

This is clearly stipulated in the reasons that Jefferson and Paine enumerates, wherein they invoke the inherent human right to self-determination. (Ibid) Indeed, Jefferson's argument on the right of the people to "alter or to abolish" a government based on its inability to protect the rights of the citizens and when it becomes an impediment towards the realization of full human development was made at a time when people lacked the confidence to believe that they were capable of governing themselves.

However, Jefferson's concept of the right of the people to a government that fully reflects and represents their collective interests and aspirations continues to resound to this day, when new forms of tyranny and new forms of oppression persists, oftentimes under the cloak of democracy or for the pursuit of human security.

It is not a stretch of the mind to note the persistence of social problems such as intolerance and discrimination based on religion, gender, or social status, or the continued poverty experienced not only by the American people more so by the rest of the world, that effectively prevents the full realization of human rights and potentials that Jefferson and Paine have so boldly championed, and on which the democratic ideals of American society were built on.