

Enlightenment in Colonial America

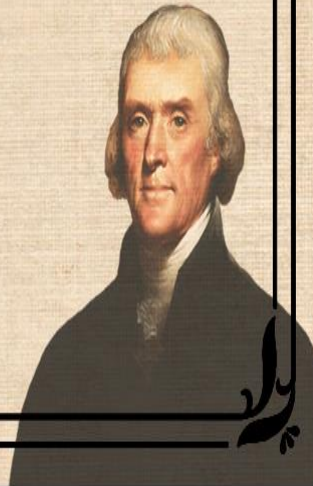


- Benjamin Franklin & Thomas Jefferson applied the ideas of the Enlightenment to the complaints of the colonists prior to the American Revolution.
- In 1766, Franklin addressed the House of Commons in Parliament & argued against “No taxation w/o representation”.
- Thomas Jefferson was inspired by John Locke & supported secular attitudes (separation of religious & political power) → influenced the Declaration of Independence from Britain.
- Later as POTUS, Jefferson’s belief in these ideas would help establish the democratic gov’t & rights citizens of the US have today.

The Declaration of Independence

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.

-Thomas Jefferson-



- In the beginning of the Declaration of Independence, the word unalienable means “cannot be taken away”.
- This wording reflects Locke’s ideas about natural rights.
- Also, it implies that people who are unhappy with their gov’t should change it (Rousseau)

The US Constitution

- James Madison was the main author of the US Constitution.
- Montesquieu's idea of separation of powers was applied to divide power amongst 3 branches of gov't:
 - Legislative Branch (Congress) would make laws.
 - Executive Branch (POTUS, VP, & cabinet) would enforce laws.
 - Judicial Branch (Supreme Court) would interpret the laws.

