

Life, Liberty, and Benjamin Franklin

Even though it has been almost 302 years since the birth of Benjamin Franklin, the great innovator still watches over the American people through all-knowing bifocals. Franklin's influences have been omnipresent since his existence. As a component of the five-man committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence, Franklin added imperative depth to the document. One critical axiom discussed in the Declaration of Independence was the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Jefferson). A fierce advocate of these rights, Franklin once proclaimed, "Freedom is not a gift bestowed upon us by other men, but a right that belongs to us by the laws of God and nature" (qtd. in Galles). This phrase certainly encompasses the rights expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and its central meaning is still relevant to modern day.

The first inherent right, life, was strongly espoused by Franklin. Free will is the key to this right, calling for one to make what he or she wants of existence. Franklin exuded momentous actions that were the building blocks of momentous achievements. His involvement with the movement against the Stamp Act, specifically, in which the British government superfluously taxed paper items, proved his ardor for a fair life. Hoping to render justice for the colonists in 1776, Franklin arranged for a question-and-answer session before the British House of Commons, according to a passage in his autobiography (255). When asked what the then-current pride of Americans was, Franklin responded: "To wear their old cloaths over again, til they can make new ones" (Franklin 260). Thus, Franklin knew that fresh life was across the horizon for defiant Americans, and he led at the helm to usher in it. In today's modern society, one can still charter his or her path of life without governmental interference. Women man CEO positions of Fortune 500 companies; doctors own private practices and breathe life into ailing patients. Because of Franklin's support for the God-given right of life, citizens in modern times capably construct their existence without fear.

The second inherent right, liberty, manifested itself in Franklin's professional life. As a printer of and avid contributor to his own newspaper *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Franklin advocated prominently for freedom of the press. For the government to encroach on one's entitlement to publish personal thoughts was nefarious, according to Franklin (van Doren 99). In a piece published in the *London Journal*, he professed, "Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as public liberty without freedom of speech..." (qtd. in van Doren 27). Franklin's stance on this issue was so adamant that his influence surely lent itself to the Bill of Rights, a document ratified in 1790 that contained 10 amendments to the nation's Constitution. The First Amendment encompassed freedoms of speech and press. Consequently, his influence extended beyond the 18th century; such rights are still preserved nowadays. Journalists are able to write critical opinion pieces on the War on Terrorism, laws passed concerning abortion, and the actions of senators without governmental infringement. The current injection of liberty into the papers and mouths of many takes root from Franklin's sound logic and passionate penchant for words.

Franklin's experimentation with electricity confirmed his effect on the pursuit of happiness, the third inherent right. After a test in which he discovered that lightning was merely electricity, Franklin endeavored to create a lightning rod, which, when attached to a house, would protect from lightning's destruction (Franklin 235-236). Thus, his experimentation with electricity was equally metaphoric. Like his invented lightning rod, Franklin channeled energy into his goals to attain achievement. Hence, pursuance is vital to this right; without it, there is no guarantee to happiness. His successful inventions not only aided him but also the rest of the nation's population. As creator of the first public library, Franklin allowed the community to gain access to gold mines of knowledge. Libraries are a mainstay in today's society, for they allow Americans to dream. Learning to read, young school-aged children envision themselves as firefighters and ballerinas, books' heroes. Because of Franklin, everyone is able to follow their dreams in America.

Ultimately, Benjamin Franklin exemplified the maximum extent of a fulfilled life during his 84 years and thus lobbied incessantly for God-given rights to be acquired through law by Americans. On July 8, 1776, the Liberty Bell rang to proclaim the rights that Franklin believed to be natural to inhabitants. Even after a crack marked the bell, Franklin's words and legacy still resound today.

Works Cited

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