



# For Liberty and Equality: The Life and Times of the Declaration of Independence

*Alexander Tsesis*

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The Declaration of Independence is one of the most influential documents in modern history—the inspiration for what would become the most powerful democracy in the world. Indeed, at every stage of American history, the Declaration has been a touchstone for evaluating the legitimacy of legal, social, and political practices. Not only have civil rights activists drawn inspiration from its proclamation of inalienable rights, but individuals decrying a wide variety of governmental abuses have turned for support to the document's enumeration of British tyranny.

In this sweeping synthesis of the Declaration's impact on American life, ranging from 1776 to the present, Alexander Tsesis offers a deeply researched narrative that highlights the many surprising ways in which this document has influenced American politics, law, and society. The drafting of the Bill of Rights, the Reconstruction Amendments, the New Deal, the Civil Rights movement—all are heavily indebted to the Declaration's principles of representative government. Tsesis demonstrates that from the founding on, the Declaration has played a central role in American political and social advocacy, congressional debates, and presidential decisions. He focuses on how successive generations internalized, adapted, and interpreted its meaning, but he also shines a light on the many American failures to live up to the ideals enshrined in the document.

Based on extensive research from primary sources such as newspapers, diaries, letters, transcripts of speeches, and congressional records, *For Liberty and Equality* shows how our founding document shaped America through successive eras and why its influence has always been crucial to the nation and our way of life.

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