

A man of contrasts, who owned slaves, Thomas Jefferson declared that all men were born equal. He included a scathing indictment of slavery in his first draft of the Declaration of Independence.

John Adams agreed with that position, but Benjamin Franklin believed such strong words would never be approved by the full Congress.

Franklin urged that the anti-slavery phrases be removed—and they were.

In addition, Franklin made a significant edit to Jefferson's original version of the Declaration of Independence.

It was *Franklin* who changed the draft from:

*We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable; that all men are created equal and independent*

to

*We hold these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal.*

Sometimes it's really great to learn how famous phrases actually originated.

This video clip—from *John Adams*, the HBO mini-series—recreates those discussions and is based on historical evidence.

**See, also:**

**[Original Draft of the Declaration with Edits by Franklin](#)**

**[John Adams Supports Independence - First Reading of the Declaration of Independence](#)**

Credits:

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