

The Pursuit of Civil Discourse



“The Declaration of Independence: Balancing Ideals with Reality”

Free Event: June 20, 2026 | 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM CST

To request giving an 8-minute presentation, write to Ted Wills: president@naeif.org

To register: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_BtkBTFLZTOSE1XU0N-IGVw

“When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted

among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness... And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

Round 1: Indigenous Perspective

1. As an indigenous student living in Canada, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Student:

High School Student:

2. As an indigenous student living in Mexico, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Student:

High School Student:

3. As an indigenous student living in the United States, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Student:

High School Student:

Round 2: Traditional Historical Perspective

4. As a Canadian student with a traditional historical perspective, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Student:

High School Student:

5. As a Mexican student with a traditional historical perspective, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Student:

High School Student:

6. As an American student with a traditional historical perspective, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Student:

High School Student:

Round 3: Critical Historical Perspective

7. As a Canadian student with a critical historical perspective, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Student:

High School Student:

8. As a Mexican student with a critical historical perspective, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Student:

High School Student:

9. As an American student with a critical historical perspective, what do you think about the American Declaration of Independence and its balancing of ideals with reality?

University Congress:

High School Congress:

SUGGESTED READINGS

- “Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto” by Taiaiake Alfred
- “The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial” by Robert N. Bellah
- “The Declaration of Independence: A Radical Experiment in Liberty” by Bradley J. Birzer
- “An Indigenous People’s History of the United States” by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
- “Heroes of 1776: The Story of the Declaration of Independence” by Neil Gorsuch & Janie Nitze (2026)
- “The 1619 Project Book” by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- “Racial Ambiguity” by Jennifer Ho
- “Signing Their Lives Away” by Denise Kiernan & Joseph D’Agnese
- “We Hold These Truths” by Rev. John Courtney Murray, SJ
- "Caste: The Origins of our Discontent" by Isabel Wilkerson
- “Inventing America: Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence” by Garry Wills

PERSONAL RECOGNITION

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