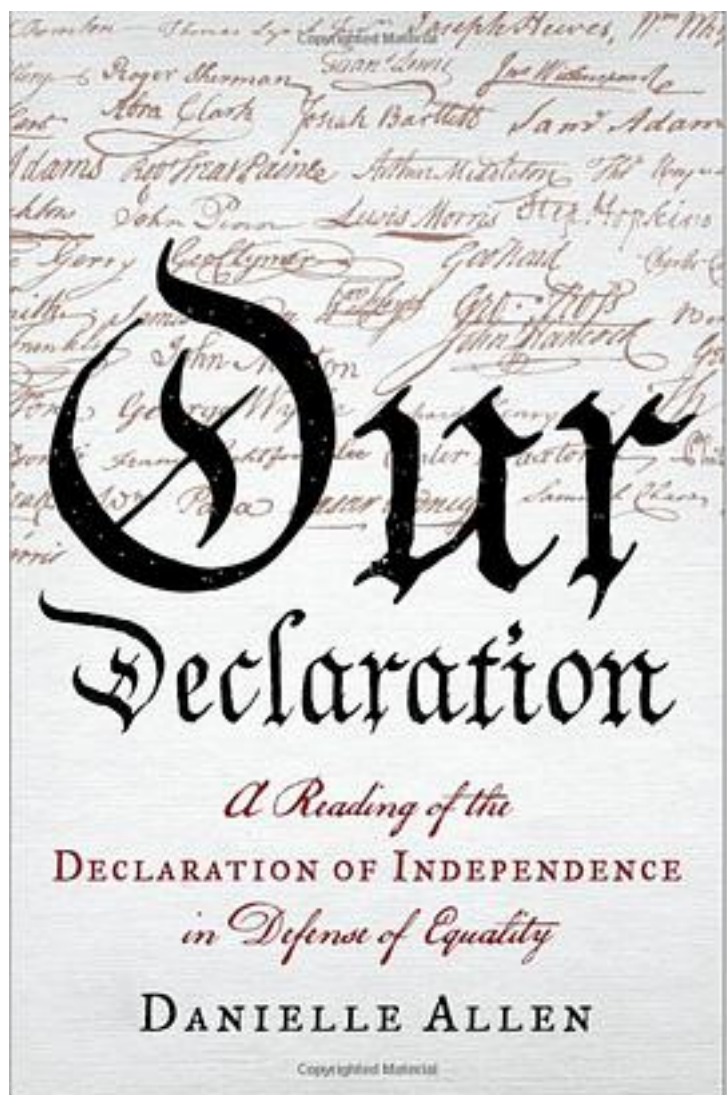


Our Declaration



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In just 1,337 words, the Declaration of Independence altered the course of history. Written in 1776, it is the most profound document in the history of government since the Magna Carta, signed nearly 800 years ago in 1215. Yet despite its paramount importance, the Declaration, curiously, is rarely read from start to finish—much less understood.

Troubled by the fact that so few Americans actually know what it says, Danielle Allen, a political philosopher renowned for her work on justice and citizenship, set out to explore the arguments of the Declaration, reading it with both adult night students and University of Chicago undergraduates. Keenly aware that the Declaration is riddled with contradictions—liberating some while subjugating slaves and Native Americans—Allen and her students nonetheless came to see that the Declaration makes a coherent and riveting argument about equality. They found not a historical text that required memorization, but an animating force that could and did transform the course of their everyday lives.

In an "uncommonly elegant, incisive, and often poetic primer on America's cardinal text," *Our Declaration* now brings these insights to the general reader, illuminating the "three great themes of the Declaration: equality, liberty, and the abiding power of language" (David M. Kennedy). Vividly evoking the colonial world between 1774 and 1777, Allen describes the challenges faced by John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston—the "Committee of Five" who had to write a document that reflected the aspirations of a restive population and forge an unprecedented social contract. Although the focus is usually on Jefferson, Allen restores credit not only to John Adams and Richard Henry Lee but also to clerk Timothy Matlack and printer Mary Katherine Goddard.

Allen also restores the astonishing text of the Declaration itself. Its list of self-evident truths does not end, as so many think, with our individual right to the "pursuit of happiness" but with the collective right of the people to reform government so that it will "effect their Safety and Happiness." The sentence laying out the self-evident truths leads us from the individual to the community—from our individual rights to what we can achieve only together, as a community constituted by bonds of equality. Challenging so much of our conventional political wisdom, *Our Declaration* boldly makes the case that we cannot have freedom as individuals without equality among us as a people.

With its cogent analysis and passionate advocacy, *Our Declaration* thrillingly affirms the continuing relevance of America's founding text, ultimately revealing what democracy actually means and what it asks of us.

作者介绍:

Danielle Allen, a professor of social science at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, is a political philosopher widely known for her work on justice and citizenship in both ancient Athens and modern America. She lives in Princeton with her husband and two children.

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标签

政治学

随笔

自由

美国

社会学

平等

历史

EAS

评论

一份基于平等视角的对独立宣言的逐句解读。干货太少，但作者提了个很有意思的问题：自由和平等的关系是此消彼长还是相辅相成？要回答这个问题，自然要问“人人生而平等”是指什么方面的平等？目前脑海中的答案是“获取自由的权利”的平等，而政府是“自由”的保障，“自由的保障”是“获取自由的权利”的一个子集，因此人人应该享有平等的政治权利。从这个系统看，美国宪法修正案其实就是在不断界定哪些因素影响人“获取自由的权利”，从政治延伸到宗教、言论等等。此外，作者脑洞实在太大，比如独立宣言第一句中的“in the course of human events..”，作者论述course的拉丁文愿意是航道，有航道就有河流，河流由重力产生方向，历史也是有重心而大势所趋...这种方式来解读文本怎能让人不吐槽？

……pre-read永远是莫名的东西。历史文本分析真的超怕教条，逐句翻译，其实还是加入今人的理念去，尤其撞上选举了……作者提出了equality的五个定义，但我还是没明白这怎么和equality对立和不同观点的碰撞。有种被教授讲睡前故事的感觉。以及上一

个版本作者还在Pton这次就去了某H哦科科

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