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Have Americans Lived up to the Country's Founding Documents?

Two major documents on which the United States of America were founded are the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence was adopted on January 4, 1776 by representatives from the thirteen colonies and the Constitution was drafted on the basis of the Declaration. This document represents the nation's birth because it granted freedom to the United States from Britain. Additionally, it meant national rights for all citizens of the country. Fifty-six delegates drafted the Declaration, written on a parchment, and signed it into law. This document is currently on display at the Washington DC National Archives Museum. However, the signatures on the Declaration of Independence are now faded and difficult to read. This is a reflection of how the document has gradually lost relevance in American society today. The overall perception in America today is that the original vision of the Declaration has been lost, judging by current political, social, and economic situations in the country. This shows that America has failed to live up to Constitution's ideals and precepts.

According to Rhode Island's, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, "it takes work and a strong will to resist the easy convenience of abandoning our founding principles in order to live up to the ideals of our Constitution." For instance, it has become the norm for the Supreme Court to ignore long-standing precedents. Over the last few years, laws have been remade and the Constitution has been amended in favor of political conservatism. Examples of which include the

Ledbetter decision in which a victim of discrimination was unjustly time barred, or *Roe v. Wade* restriction for abortion, which was decided although it disregarded a woman's health and safety (Whitehouse). Such examples show the failure of the Supreme Court to live up to the original vision of the Constitution, which stands for true congressional intent and judicial conservatism.

The Declaration of Independence continues to be a binding document today. Additionally, it is an integral part of American life, because it is a guide to how the government should handle various matters. However, in several areas, it seems that the Declaration of Independence has been taken out of context, particularly regarding United States foreign policy. Many countries of the world are ruled by tyrannical leaders, and these countries often experience humanitarian and political issues. This has resulted in our nation disregarding domestic challenges facing the American people, as it has gotten involved in other countries' problems, which they experience because of their dictatorial leadership. For example, the Iraq experience has resulted in the loss of more than 3,000 American lives, simply for the sake of attempting to sort out problems in Iraq. Innocent American lives being lost had nothing to do with the core values of the Declaration of Independence, which are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (The Avalon Project).

In conclusion, it can be argued that America has not lived up to the founding documents' visions. For example, the *Roe v. Wade* case is evidence of how far America have retrogressed regarding the issue of protecting the value of life, as advocated in the Declaration of Independence. Another example would be the rise in crime rates, which reflects the lack of commitment to protecting lives. In today's world, the pursuit of happiness has changed into the pursuit of money in America, and liberty is often decided by a person's economic and social status. Americans should remember the valiant men and women who lost their lives for the sake

of freedom in this country and make a better effort at living up to the visions of the country's founding documents.

Works Cited

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