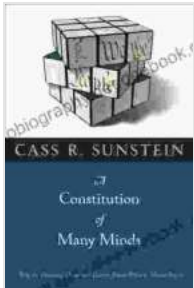


# Why the Founding Document Doesn't Mean What It Meant Before



## A Constitution of Many Minds: Why the Founding Document Doesn't Mean What It Meant Before

by Cass R. Sunstein

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1682 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 237 pages



The Founding Document of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, is a powerful and inspiring document that has shaped the course of American history. However, the meaning of the Declaration has changed over time, and it is important to understand why.

One of the most significant changes in the meaning of the Declaration has been the shift in focus from its original emphasis on natural rights to its later emphasis on individual rights. The Declaration was originally written as a statement of the natural rights of all men, including the rights to life, liberty, and property. However, over time, the focus of the Declaration has shifted to the protection of individual rights, such as the right to free speech, the right to bear arms, and the right to a fair trial.

This shift in focus has been due in part to the rise of the individualist ethos in American society. In the early days of the United States, the emphasis was on the collective good, and the rights of individuals were often subordinated to the needs of the community. However, as the United States became more prosperous and industrialized, the focus of society shifted from the collective to the individual. This shift in focus was reflected in the changing interpretation of the Declaration of Independence.

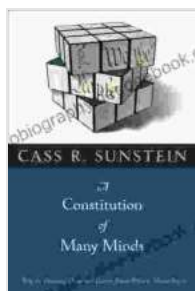
Another factor that has contributed to the change in the meaning of the Declaration has been the rise of the legal profession in the United States. In the early days of the United States, the legal profession was relatively small and weak. However, as the United States became more complex and litigious, the legal profession grew in size and power. This growth in the legal profession led to a more legalistic interpretation of the Declaration of Independence.

The legalistic interpretation of the Declaration has emphasized the specific language of the document and has led to a narrowing of its original meaning. For example, the Declaration's statement that "all men are created equal" has been interpreted to mean that all men are equal before the law. This interpretation has been used to justify a wide range of laws and policies that have created and maintained inequality in American society.

The changing meaning of the Declaration of Independence is a complex and ongoing process. It is a process that has been shaped by a variety of factors, including the rise of the individualist ethos, the growth of the legal profession, and the changing social and political landscape of the United

States. It is important to understand this process in order to understand the current meaning of the Declaration and its role in American society.

The Founding Document of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, is a powerful and inspiring document that has shaped the course of American history. However, the meaning of the Declaration has changed over time, and it is important to understand why. The shift in focus from its original emphasis on natural rights to its later emphasis on individual rights, the rise of the individualist ethos in American society, and the growth of the legal profession have all contributed to the changing meaning of the Declaration. It is important to understand this process in order to understand the current meaning of the Declaration and its role in American society.



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