

I believe John Witherspoon was personally and thoroughly invested in seeing many if not all of the colonies' enumerated grievances relieved by declaring the independence of The United States of America. King George III and his parliament interfered with and hindered governance of the colonies by the colonists and threatened the safety of the states and their citizens without redress. John Witherspoon was a religious, political, and philosophical man and would have found all of these trespasses to violate his and his countrymen's right to personal freedom in all accounts.

While these assaults of the crown would have disturbed anyone, one reason all of these grievances may have resonated with John Witherspoon particularly was because he was an adherent of Scottish Common Sense Realism. The practicality of this philosophy positioned personal freedom as a natural conclusion from its first principles, and as such all of these violations of freedom stand opposed to his philosophy. While president at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University) he also served as professor of moral philosophy. He must have taught with much enthusiasm judging by how some would refer to the college as the "seedbed" of revolution. While the ratification of the Declaration of Independence would surely mean war, a war John Witherspoon would lose his eldest son James to, his signature proves he felt these grievances were intolerable and demanded rectification at all costs, a price one would pay under only the most dire circumstances.

While John Witherspoon's philosophy was rooted in a rigorous framework based upon common sense philosophy, I believe the public's viewpoint would have been from a more practical angle. Grievances such as the deployment of soldiers and mercenaries during this time of peace, quartering said soldiers at the colonist's expense, the crown's hindrance of the colonists' trade, the taxation of necessary commodities without their consent, lack of legal recourse to unjust laws, and impressment to bear arms against their own countrymen were apparent and visible problems that would have affected the lives of the entire populace. I believe grievances related to the restriction of political rights and freedoms would not have weighed as heavily on the public as these daily hindrances and threats, though these were ultimately outcomes of a lack of political and legal representation.

The third grievance resonates with me the most: "He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inestimable to them, and formidable to Tyrants only." To me this grievance gets to the center of the issue most immediately: people have the right to self-governance, and the prevention of such is tyranny. Similar grievances describe George III not assenting to laws, dissolving and hindering representative bodies, and preventing elections or appointing his own men to offices. The third grievance specifically demonstrates the autocratic streak of George III by preventing the function of colonial democratic institutions.

Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence we have not had any blatant anti-republican elements successfully override our American system of democracy. The members of the Constitutional Convention handed to us a robust system of governance resistant to overthrow via the separation of power. I don't believe we can encounter tyranny of this sort following this template of governance. However, should the Constitution be subverted and I am not permitted representation, I would be distraught that the democracy that the signers envisioned had lapsed during my lifetime. Being unable to keep the Republic would change the entire landscape of this country in ways I am unable to envision. All of the grievances suffered

by the colonists could be re-suffered, something I hope never comes to pass. How and with what methods I cannot say, but I would hope that I could work with my fellow citizens to regain what the delegates of the Second Continental Congress had envisioned for us all.