<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal and Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Influence in 1776 and Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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| **Equality**  
“All men are created equal.” | The ideal situation in which all people are treated the same and valued equally. | **1776:** Christianity taught that “all people are equal in God’s eyes.” The colonists rejected the inequality found in Europe. Still, some held slaves, and women were treated unequally.  
**Today:** Progress has been made in expanding equality, but some argue that “equality of condition” needs to be provided to all. |
| **Rights**  
“They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” | Powers or privileges granted to people either by an agreement among themselves or by law | **1776:** Jefferson argued in favor of natural, or universal, rights belonging to all humankind.  
**Today:** Americans have many rights that are found in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. However, some people still argue for an expansion of rights. |
| **Liberty**  
“that among these [rights] are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” | Liberty can mean different things:  
- political freedom  
- civil liberty  
- moral and religious freedom  
- the opposite of slavery | **1776:** Liberty was extremely important to the colonists, and they fought for freedom from Great Britain. However, one fifth of the population was enslaved.  
**Today:** Americans agree that liberty provides the ability to make choices and that limits must be placed on those choices. Americans debate about where to set those limits. |
| **Opportunity**  
“that among these [rights] are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” | The chance for people to pursue their hopes and dreams | **1776:** Americans held a strong belief in opportunity from the early colonial period. Opportunity encouraged new settlers.  
**Today:** Opportunity still brings newcomers, but some wonder whether true opportunity is available to all. |
| **Democracy**  
“That to secure these rights Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” | A system of government based on the consent of the governed | **1776:** Americans used democracy on a local level throughout the colonial period. Yet some wondered whether democracy could work on a larger scale and who should speak for “the governed.”  
**Today:** All citizens over the age of 18 can now vote, yet not everyone participates. |