

January 30, 2017

Mr. Thomas Jefferson  
Continental Congress  
Independence Hall  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dear Thomas Jefferson,

I would like to respectfully introduce myself. My name is Louis.

I recently read two books about you, the first was "Thomas Jefferson: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Everything", by Maria Kalman. The second was "Who Was Thomas Jefferson" by Dennis Frindell Fradin. After reading these books, I am very impressed by your life and many accomplishments, but I was left with several questions I would like to ask.

To start, one of the books said that you love to read. I was excited to hear this because I love to read as well and know that we have this in common. I saw that you liked to read Shakespeare and I wonder which play or poem of his was your favorite? I have only read two works by Shakespeare and so far *Julius Cesar* is my favorite.

Recently, at school we have been learning about a civil rights leader that lived in the 1960s, the great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His speeches about equality and respect for all humans borrow greatly from our nation's most famous document - *The Declaration of Independence*. I know that you were one of the authors of this groundbreaking declaration. In the second sentence it says, "we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", some say that this is the most famous sentence in the English language. Dr. King himself quoted these words as he begged the nation to give up its ways of hate and prejudice. He said that the words were our founding father's promise that all Americans have these rights.

Knowing that you were the original author of the very first draft of the document, I had read that you were not happy with some of the changes that second Continental Congress made. More specifically, there were references to slavery being an injustice and leftover from the wrongs of the English, but the final copy does not have this reference. I wonder whether this might have been something you regret and I wonder whether things may have turned out differently for our country if the final copy of the Declaration of Independence addressed the mistreatment of slaves.

I was very interested to read about your home, Monticello, in Virginia. I read that it took you about 39 years to build and that you were constantly changing things about your home. It would be interesting to know why it took so long to build and also, why were you constantly changing things? I think it's because almost everything interested you, from books; to collections; to music; to gardening; to your love of the outdoors. I think your changes were attempts to keep up with your great curiosity and enthusiasm for life.

Yours respectfully,

Louis