Historian's interpretation #1: Modified Excerpts from *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* by Bernard Bailyn (1967)

The Declaration of Independence represents the colonists' deepest fears and beliefs. The colonists believed they saw a clear pattern in the events that followed 1763. They believed they saw an evil and deliberate conspiracy to crush liberty in America. They saw evidence of this conspiracy in the Stamp Act and in the Coercive Acts.

They also believed that America was destined to play a special role in history. They believed that America would become "the foundation of a great and mighty empire, the largest the world ever saw to be founded on such principles of liberty and freedom, both civil and religious." The colonists believed that England was trying to enslave them, and that they should use "all the power which God has given them" to protect themselves.

Historian's interpretation #2: Modified Excerpts from *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn (1980)

It seemed clear to the educated, upper-class colonists that something needed to be done to persuade the lower class to join the revolutionary cause, to direct their anger against England. The solution was to find language inspiring to all classes, specific enough in its listing of grievances to fill people with anger against the British, vague enough to avoid class conflict, and stirring enough to build patriotic feelings.

Everything the Declaration of Independence was about – popular control over governments, the right of rebellion and revolution, fury at political tyranny, economic burdens, and military attacks – was well suited to unite large numbers of colonists and persuade even those who had grievances against one another to turn against England. Some Americans were clearly omitted from those united by the Declaration of Independence: Indians, black slaves, and women.