

Thomas Jefferson's Monticello Stands with Ukraine

by Monticello - March 14, 2022

Late in life, Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Adams that “the flames kindled on the 4th of July 1776 have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism. On the contrary, they will consume those engines, and all who work them.” [1]

The unprovoked invasion of a sovereign state by another violates fundamental international law and reminds us that engines of despotism and lawlessness still exist and must be opposed. The citizens of Ukraine, whose independence was internationally recognized in 1991, are engaged in a valiant defense of their independence. Their determination underscores the power of the ideals of freedom and self-government.

We at the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, reflecting ideals articulated by Jefferson, support the essential “principle of representative democracy.” [2] We support the human right of self-determination. We support the right of all people to peacefully petition or protest their government. As a reflection of these values, we have directed our investment managers to divest any existing positions in Russia or its satellites held in our endowment portfolio.

Our nation's Founding ideals of freedom, self-government, and freedom of conscience still guide us and serve as models around the world. Our mission is to share the history of our founding to teach, inspire, and remind us of unfinished work to realize and sustain these ideals. While Jefferson and other American Founders failed to ensure these principles extended to all peoples, they saw them as essential guides for enlightened human progress.

Each year, Monticello hosts a Naturalization Ceremony on the 4th of July, Independence Day, where people from around the world share their stories of hardship and hope that inspired them to become citizens. We offer a brief reflection of those as a reminder of why participation in, and support of, freedom of conscience and self-government are human ideals.

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