THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

By Miscellaneous

In Congress, July 4, 1776,

THE UNANIMOUS DECLARATION OF THE THIRTEEN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one

people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them

with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the

separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of

Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of

mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel

them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created

equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain

unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the

pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men,

deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these

ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it,

and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such

principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them

shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established

should not be changed for light and transient causes; and

accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more

disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right

themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing

invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them under

absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw

off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future

security.

Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such

is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former

Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great

Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all

having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny

over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a

candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and

necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and

pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till

his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has

utterly neglected to attend to them.

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.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual,

uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public

Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance

with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing

with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause

others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable

of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their

exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the

dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States;

for that purpose obstructing the Laws of Naturalization of

Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations

hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his

Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure

of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms

of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without

the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and

superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction

foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws;

giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any

Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring

Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and

enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example

and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into

these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws,

and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves

invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his

Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns,

and destroyed the Lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign

mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny,

already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely

paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the

Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high

Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners

of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has

endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the

merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an

undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for

Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have

been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character

is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit

to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attention to our British brethren.

We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their

legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We

have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and

settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and

magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common

kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably

interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been

deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must,

therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our

Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind,

Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America,

in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of

the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name,

and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly

publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right

ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved

from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political

connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and

ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent

States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract

Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things

which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of

this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine

Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our

Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

JOHN HANCOCK, President

Attested, CHARLES THOMSON, Secretary

New Hampshire

JOSIAH BARTLETT

WILLIAM WHIPPLE

MATTHEW THORNTON

Massachusetts-Bay

SAMUEL ADAMS

JOHN ADAMS

ROBERT TREAT PAINE

ELBRIDGE GERRY

Rhode Island

STEPHEN HOPKINS

WILLIAM ELLERY

Connecticut

ROGER SHERMAN

SAMUEL HUNTINGTON

WILLIAM WILLIAMS

OLIVER WOLCOTT

Georgia

BUTTON GWINNETT

LYMAN HALL

GEO. WALTON

Maryland

SAMUEL CHASE

WILLIAM PACA

THOMAS STONE

CHARLES CARROLL

OF CARROLLTON

Virginia

GEORGE WYTHE

RICHARD HENRY LEE

THOMAS JEFFERSON

BENJAMIN HARRISON

THOMAS NELSON, JR.

FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT LEE

CARTER BRAXTON.

New York

WILLIAM FLOYD

PHILIP LIVINGSTON

FRANCIS LEWIS

LEWIS MORRIS

Pennsylvania

ROBERT MORRIS

BENJAMIN RUSH

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

JOHN MORTON

GEORGE CLYMER

JAMES SMITH

GEORGE TAYLOR

JAMES WILSON

GEORGE ROSS

Delaware

CAESAR RODNEY

GEORGE READ

THOMAS M'KEAN

North Carolina

WILLIAM HOOPER

JOSEPH HEWES

JOHN PENN

South Carolina

EDWARD RUTLEDGE

THOMAS HEYWARD, JR.

THOMAS LYNCH, JR.

ARTHUR MIDDLETON

New Jersey

RICHARD STOCKTON

JOHN WITHERSPOON

FRANCIS HOPKINS

JOHN HART

ABRAHAM CLARK

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