

A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA in General Congress assembled.

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 & 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 unalienable & inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, & 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 & organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness. Providence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light & transient causes, and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than they are accustomed to be rid of them; and yet when a long train of abuses & usurpations, begun at a distant quiescent period & pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty, to throw off such government & to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; & such is now the necessity which constrains them to expunge their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of unremitting injuries & usurpations, among which appears no solitary fact to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest; but all have in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this let facts be submitted to a candid world for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unshaken by false hold. He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome & necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate & pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; & when so suspended he has neglected utterly 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 & formidable to tyrants only.

he has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, & 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, & continually 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, & convulsions within:

he has endeavored to prevent the population of these states, for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners, refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, & raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands:

he has suffered the administration of justice to cease in some of these states, refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers:

he has made our judges dependant on his will alone for the tenure of their offices & the amount & payment of their salaries:

he has erected a multitude of new offices by a pretended power, & sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, & eat out their substance:

he has kept among us in times of peace standing armies, & ships of war, without the consent of our legislatures:

he has affected to render the military independant of, and superior to, the civil power:

he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitutions, 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 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 neighboring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging it's boundaries, so as to render it at once an example & fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these states;

for taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and allowing

fundamentally the form of our governments;
for suspending our own legislatures & declaring themselves invested with power
to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever:
he has abdicated government here, by disowning his governors, & declaring us out of
his allegiance & protection:
he has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, & destroyed the lives of our people:
he is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works
of death, desolation & tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty & pro-
fide, unworthy the head of a civilized nation:
he has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian
savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all
age, sex, & conditions of existence:
he has incited treasonable insurrections of our fellow citizens with the allurements
of forfeiture & confiscation of our property:
he has constrained others, taken captives 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 waged cruel war against humanity itself, violating its most sacred
rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him, captiv-
ating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable
death in their transportation: Neither this partial warfare, the oppression
of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain, deter-
mined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has
prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit
or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors
might want no fact of distinguished dye, he is now exciting those very people to
rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them,
by murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes
committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes which he urges them
to commit against the lives of another.

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 people who
mean to be free. future ages will scarce believe that the hardiness of one man adventured
within the short compass of twelve years only, to build a foundation, so broad & undissipable,
for tyranny over a people fostered & bred in principles of freedom.

nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. we have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend a jurisdiction over these our states; we have reminded them of the circumsstances of our emigration & settlement here, no one of which could warrant so strange a pretension; that these were effected at the expense of our own blood & treasure, unassisted by the wealth or the strength of Great Britain. That in constituting indeed several forms of government, we had adopted our common King, thereby laying a foundation for perpetual league & amity with them; but that submission to their parliament was no part of our constitution, nor ever an idea of history may be credited; and we appealed to their native justice & magnanimity, as well as to the ties of our common kindred, to discover these usurpations, which were likely to interrupt our communication & correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice & of conciliation, and when occasions have been given them, by the regular course of their laws, of removing from their councils the disturbers of our harmony, they have by their free election re-established them in power, at this very time too they are permitting their chief magistracy to send over not only soldiers of our common blood, but [Scotch and] foreign mercenaries to invade & destroy us. These facts have given the last stab to agonizing affection, and a manly spirit bids us to renounce this unequal connection with our British brethren, we renounce them, we renounce them, we renounce them, and to hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, or peace friends. we might have been a free & a great people together; but a communication of grandeur and of freedom it seems us below their dignity. Be it so, since they will have it, the road to happiness and to glory is open to us too; we will climb it apart from them, and acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our eternal separation!

We therefore the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, do, in the name & by authority of the good people of these states reject and renounce all allegiance & subjection to the Kings of Great Britain, and all others who may hereafter claim by, through, or under them; we utterly dissolve all political connection which may heretofore have subsisted between us & the parliament or people of Great Britain, and finally we do assert these colonies to be free & independent states, and that as free & independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, & to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes & our sacred honor.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.
A DECLARATION
 BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
 IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

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 shewn, 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 for 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 and 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 Attentions 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.

Signed by ORDER and in BEHALF of the CONGRESS,

JOHN HANCOCK, PRESIDENT.

ATTEST.
CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY.

PHILADELPHIA: PRINTED BY JOHN DUNLAP.