

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, & independent; that from that equal creation they derive <sup>they are endowed by their creator with equal</sup> inherent &inalienable rights; that among these are ~~life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness;~~ <sup>life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness;</sup> that to secure these <sup>rights,</sup> 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, & 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 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 & usurpations, [begun at a distinguished period, &] pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to ~~reduce~~ reduce them <sup>under absolute Despotism,</sup> it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such a <sup>form of government,</sup> & to provide new <sup>guardians</sup> for their future security, such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; & such is now the necessity which constrains them to ~~expunge~~ <sup>abandon</sup> their former systems of government. The history of <sup>the</sup> present <sup>\* King of Great Britain</sup> <sup>reigned</sup> ~~King~~ is a history of unremitted injuries and usurpations, [among which, <sup>appears no solitary fact</sup> ~~but all~~ <sup>in the</sup> ~~have~~ to contra-] to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, ~~all of which 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 unsullied by falsehood.

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 & pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has <sup>utterly</sup> neglected &怠慢 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, a right inestimable to them & formidable to the states: <sup>in the legislative bodies at places unusual, unequal, & dependent of their public records for the sole & noise of fitting with his measures.</sup>

<sup>time after such dissolution,</sup> he has refused for a long space of time, 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: 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 totally to cease in some of these states, <sup>by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers:</sup>

he has made [our] judges dependant on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, <sup>the + payment</sup> and amount of their salaries: <sup>+ D. Franklin</sup>

he has erected a multitude of new offices [by a self-assumed power,] & sent hi-

-ther swarms of officers to harass our people & eat out their substance:

he has kept among us in times of peace standing armies <sup>without the consent of our</sup> ~~without our consent~~ <sup>legislature,</sup> & ships of war:

he has affected to render the military independent of & superior to the civil power:

he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our consti-  
tution and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their pretended <sup>act of</sup> ~~pretended~~ <sup>which</sup> legislation, for quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;

for protecting them by a mock-trial from punishment for any murders  
<sup>which</sup> 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 <sup>in many cases</sup> 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, & rendering it's laws subordinate to an example & fit instrument for introducing the same into this & the other colonies.

+ D<sup>r</sup>. Franklin

abolishing our most valuable & laws  
for taking away our charters, altering fundamentally the forms of our government,  
for suspending our own legislatures & declaring themselves invested with power to  
legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

he has abdicated government here, [by <sup>declaring us out of his protection &</sup> waging war against us.  
withdrawing 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 work of death, desolation & tyranny; who will enslave us without scruple or shame.

scarcely paralleled in the most abominable ages - totally  
of cruelty & perfidy, unworthy the head of a civilized nation:

x he has <sup>excited domestic insurrections among us and has</sup> endeavored 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, & conditions [of existence.]

He has incited treasonable insurrections of our fellow-citizens, with the

x allurements of forfeiture & confiscation of our property;  
he has encouraged ~~open rebellion~~ <sup>the high road to self-government</sup>, to become the executors of their own <sup>treacherous</sup> friends. It was then  
he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most se-

-red rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never off-  
fended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere

- or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. the  
practical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the  
Christian king of Great Britain, determined 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

determining to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold:  
accrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact

of distinguished die, 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 ~~endeavoring to impose upon whom he also obstructed 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 <sup>only</sup> by repeated injuries. a prince

whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit  
to be the ruler <sup>free</sup> of a people [who mean to be free]. future ages will scarce believe

that the hardness of one man, adventured within the short compass of twelve years  
to <sup>found</sup> a foundation so broad & undisguised for tyranny  
only, ~~after many~~, over a people fostered & fixed in principles  
of liberty, freedom]

+ D<sup>r</sup>. Franklin

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] <sup>an unwarrantable</sup>. we have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration & settlement here, [no one of which could warrant so strange a pretension: that these were effected at the expence of our own blood & treasure, assisted by the wealth or the strength of Great Britain: that in constituting indeed our several forms of government, we had adopted one common king, thereby laying a foundation for perpetual league & amity with them: but that submission to their

creditors: and we have appealed to their native justice & magnanimity, as well as to the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations which <sup>were evidently</sup> to interdict our correspondence.

They too have been deaf to the voice of justice & of consanguinity, [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 magistrate to send over not only soldiers of our common

blood, but Scotch & foreign mercenaries to invade & <sup>destroy us.</sup> <sup>+ D. America</sup>

Given the first state to a ~~joining~~ affection and mankind's best <sup>interests</sup> to no man: these unfeeling brethren. we must endeavor to forget our former

love for them, and to hold them as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war,

in peace friends. we might have been a free & a great people together; but a commun-

ication of grandeur & of freedom it seems is below their dignity. be it so, since they will have it: the road to ~~glory~~ <sup>et. glori</sup> happiness, is open to us too; we will stand it on

apart from them, <sup>and hold them as we hold the rest of mankind in war, in peace, / now & de-</sup>  
~~separately~~, and ~~acquiesce in the necessity which provokes our~~ <sup>de-</sup>  
~~country to stand~~ <sup>eternal</sup> separation!

We therefore the representatives of the United States of America in General Con-

gress assembled, do in the name & by authority of the good people of these <sup>colonies</sup> [states]

reject all allegiance & subjection to the kings of Great Britain

& all others who may hereafter claim by, through, or under them; & <sup>have</sup> utterly

dissolved & break off all political connection which may <sup>have</sup> heretofore <sup>had</sup> subsisted between us & the people or parliament of Great Britain; and finally

we do assert and declare these colonies to be free and independent states,

and that as free & independent states they shall hereafter 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 honour.