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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 ~~[declare the causes which impel them to the separation.]~~ 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, ~~sacred & undeniable~~; that all men are created equal, ~~& independant~~; that they are endowed by their creator with certain ~~inherent~~ unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, ~~ends~~ governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government ~~shall~~ becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, & to ~~institute~~ new government, laying it's foundation on such principles & organising it's powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness prudence 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 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 under absolute Despotism, it is their right, 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 alter [expunge] their former systems of government. the history of the present king of Great Britain is a history of [unremitting] injuries and usurpations, [among which, appears no solitary fact 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 pub-
-lic 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 utterly neglected to attend to them
he has refused to pass other laws for the accomodation 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 emigrations hither, & raising the conditions of new ap-
propriations of lands
he has suspended the administration of justice totally 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 & 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 without the consent of our legislatures
he has affected to render the military independant of & superior to the civil power
he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitu
tion and unacknowleged by our laws, giving his assent to their pretended acts
of 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

* Franklin

† abrogating our most valuable ~~important~~ Laws

for taking away our Charters, ^altering fundamentally the forms of our governments

for suspending our own legislatures & declaring themselves invested with power to

legislate for us in all cases whatsoever:

by declaring us out of his protection & waging war against us

he has abdicated government here, [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.

Scotch and other

he is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to compleat

the works of death desolation & tyranny already begun with circumstances

scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages and totally

of cruelty & perfidy 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 ages, sexes, & 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 captive on the high seas to bear arms against their country, to be the

executioners of their friends & brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sa-

-cred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never of-

fended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemis-

phere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. this

piratical 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. ^and 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~~

execrable 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 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

* Franklin terms: our repeated petitions have been answered ^only by repeated injuries 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 [who mean to be free. future ages will scarce believe

that the hardiness ^and audacity of one man adventured within the short compass of twelve years

only, to build a foundation so broad & undisguised, for tyranny

~~to lay a foundation so broad & undisguised for tyranny~~ over a people fostered & fixed in principles

~~of liberty~~. 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 an unwarrantable jurisdiction over [these our states]. 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, unassisted 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 parliament was no part of our constitution, nor ever in idea if history may be credited: and] we have appealed to their native justice & magnanimity, & we have conjured them by [as well as to] the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations which [would inevitably interrupt our connection & correspondence ~~& connection~~. they too have been deaf to the voice of justice & of consanguinity. [& when we must therefore 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 & destroy us † D Franklin ~~delge & annihilate~~ these facts have given the last stab to agonizing affection, and manly spirit bids us to renounce for ever 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 communication of grandeur & of freedom it seems is below their dignity. be it so since they will have it. the road to ~~glory &~~ happiness & to glory is open to us too, we will ~~march~~ tread it apart from them, and [we must therefore ~~acquiesce~~ acquiesce in the necessity which ~~denounces~~ denounces our eternal 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 & by authority of the good people of these [states] colonies [reject and renounce all allegiance & subjection to the kings of Great Britain & all others who may hereafter claim by, through, or under them; we utterly dissolve & ~~break off~~ all political connection which may ~~have~~ heretofore subsisted between us & the people or parliament of Great Britain; and finally we do assert and declare these colonies to be free and independant states and that as free & independant states they ~~shall have~~ have full power to levy war conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, & to do all other acts and things which independant 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.

a different reading

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