

~~Taken out of~~ Jefferson's Rough Draft «Added» To Final Draft

«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 a «one» people to ~~advance from that subordination in which they have hitherto remained,~~ «dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another,» and to assume among the powers of the earth, ~~the equal & independant~~ «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 ~~change~~«separation».

We hold these truths to be ~~sacred & undeniable;~~ «self-evident,» that all men are created equal ~~& independant,~~ that ~~from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable,~~ «they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that» among which «these» are ~~the preservation of~~ life, & liberty, and the pursuit of happiness— That to secure these ~~ends~~ «rights», governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government ~~shall become~~ «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, ~~begun at a distinguished period, &~~ pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design ~~to subject them to arbitrary power~~ «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 ~~expunge~~ «alter» their former systems of government. The history of his present ~~majesty,~~ «King of Great-Britain» is a history of ~~unremitting~~ «repeated» injuries and usurpations, ~~among which no one fact stands single or solitary to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, all of which have~~ «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 ~~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 and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has ~~neglected utterly~~ «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, and formidable to tyrants alone.

«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 ~~& continually~~, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long ~~space of~~ 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 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, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has ~~suffered~~ «obstructed» the administration of justice ~~totally to cease in some of these colonies,~~ «by» 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, and «the» amount «and payment» of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of new offices ~~by a self-assumed power~~, and sent hither swarms of officers to harrass our people, and 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 independent 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 ~~pretended~~ 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 neighboring 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, ~~withdrawing his governors, &~~ «by» declaring us out of his allegiance & 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 complete 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» 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, and conditions of existence.

~~He has incited treasonable insurrections in our fellow citizens, with the allurements of forfeiture & confiscation of our property.~~

~~He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, 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 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 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 terms: our repeated petitions have been answered 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 ~~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, on so many acts of tyranny without a mask, over a people fostered & fixed in principles of liberty.~~

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 «an unwarrantable» jurisdiction over ~~these our states «us»~~. 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 and magnanimity, ~~as well as to~~ «and we have conjured them by» the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, ~~were likely to~~ «would inevitably» interrupt our ~~correspondence & connection~~ «connections and correspondence». They too have been

deaf to the voice of justice and 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 & deluge us in blood. 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 happiness & to glory is open to us too; we will climb it separately, and~~ «We must, therefore,» acquiesce in the necessity, which 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, and 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;~~ «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» ~~we utterly dissolve & break off all political connection which may have heretofore subsisted between us & the people or parliament~~ «them and the state» of Great-Britain, ~~and finally we do assert and declare these colonies to be free and independant states,~~ «is and ought to be totally dissolved;» and that as free and independent states, they ~~shall hereafter~~ 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.»