

Thomas Jefferson, June 1776, Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence

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Superscript text indicates additions/changes to the previous draft of the Declaration.

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 hither to remained, & to ^{*dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another others, and to*} assume among the powers of the earth the equal & independent ^{*^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 change ^{*the*} *separation*.

We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable ^{*^self-evident*}; that all men are created equal & independent; that from that equal creation they derive in rights ^{*they are endowed by their creator with*} *equal rights, some of which are* ^{*^certain*} [inherent &] inalienable ^{*^rights; that*} among which ^{*^these*} are the preservation of life, & liberty, & 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 becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, & to institute a 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 subject reduce them to arbitrary power ^{*^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 [expunge] ^{*alter*} their former systems of government. the history of his ^{*^the*} present majesty ^{*^*King of Great Britain*} is a history of [unremitting] ^{*repeated*} injuries and usurpations, [among which no one fact stands single and solitary ^{*appears no solitary fact*} ^{*^*} to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, all of which ^{*but*} ^{*all having*} [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 ^{^utterly} neglected utterly 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 dissolved, he has refused for a long space of time ^{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:

[in right margin: "*Mr Adams"]

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 [totally to cease in some of these colonies ^{^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, and ^{^the} amount ^{† & payment} of their salaries:

[in right margin: "† D^r. Franklin"]

he has erected a multitude of new offices [by a self-assumed power,] & sent hither swarms of officers to harrass our people & eat out their substance:

he has kept among us in times of peace ^{^without our consent} standing armies [& ships of war ^{^without our the consent of our ^legislature.}]

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 constitutions and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their ^{^acts of} 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 offenses;

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 colonies states;

for taking away our charters, ^{^†}*abolishing our most important valuable laws* & 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:

he has abdicated government here, *by declaring us out of his protection & urging 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 [^]*Scotch and other* foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation & 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 [continually] excited domestic insurrection amongst us and has 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, falling into his hands, taken captives on the high seas to bear arms against their country, & to destroy & be destroyed by their brethren whom they love, to become 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 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 [^]*determining to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold*: 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 ^{^†}^{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 hardness of one man, adventured within the short compass of twelve years only, ^{to lay ^build a foundation so broad & undisguised, for tyranny} on so many acts of tyranny without a mask, 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} a jurisdiction over [these our ^{us} 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, [as well as to] ^{& we have conjured them on} the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations which *would inevitably* [were likely to] interrupt our ^{^connection &} correspondence. & connection. they too have been deaf to the voice of justice & of consanguinity, [^{We must therefore} 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 ^{^†} & *destroy us.* deluge us in blood. these facts have given the last stab to agonizing affection, and manly spirit bids us to renounce forever 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 ^{^must tread} climb it in a ^{part from them} a separately state, and] acquiesce in the necessity which pro^{de-} nounces our everlasting *Adieu! [eternal] separation!* ^{and hold them as the rest of mankind enemies in war, in peace friends.}

[in right margin: "† D^r. Franklin"]

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 the 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 ^{^have} 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 hereafter 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.

[in right margin: "or different phraseology inserted"]

Images of Original Text on following pages.

https://www.loc.gov/resource/mtj1.001_0545_0548/?sp=4&st=image

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} ~~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~~ ^{the} separation.

We hold these truths to be ^{self-evident} ~~self-evident~~, that all men are created equal & independent that ^{they are endowed by their creator with certain} ~~they are endowed by their creator with certain~~ rights, that among ^{these} ~~these~~ are life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these ^{rights} ~~rights~~, 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 its foundation on such principles & organizing its 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 them ^{under absolute Despotism} ~~under absolute Despotism~~, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such a 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} ~~tear up~~ their former systems of government. the history of ^{the} ~~the~~ present ^{King of Great Britain} ~~King of Great Britain~~ is a history of ^{repeated} ~~repeated~~ injuries and usurpations, among which, ^{appears no solitary fact} ~~appears no solitary fact~~ to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest ^{but shall be} ~~but shall be~~ 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 unscullied by falsehood.

Handwritten notes in the left margin, including "T. Franklin's handwriting" and "and Alexander's".

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 ^{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, a right in the legislature ^{in the legislature} inseparable to them. ^{It is impossible to transmit} ^{the various} ^{legislature} ^{bodies} ^{at} ^{places} ^{unusual,} ^{uncon-} ^{venient} ^{and} ^{incon-} ^{venient} ^{for} ^{the} ^{public} ^{record} ^{for} ^{the} ^{sole} ^{purpose} ^{of} ^{fatiguing} ^{with} ^{the} ^{measure}

~~he has~~ he has refused for a long ^{time after the dissolution of} ~~space of time~~ to cause others to be elected, ^{time after the dissolution of} ~~and~~ ^{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} ^{destroying} ^{the} ^{laws} ^{for} ^{naturalization} ^{of} ^{foreigners;} ^{refusing} ^{to} ^{pass} ^{others} ^{to} ^{encourage} ^{their} ^{migrations} ^{hither;} [&] ^{raising} ^{the} ^{conditions} ^{of} ^{new} ^{ap-} ^{propriations} ^{of} ^{lands:}

he has ^{supposed} ^{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} [&] ^{payment} ^{and} ^{amount} ^{of} ^{their} ^{salaries:}

he has erected a multitude of new offices ^{by a self-assumed power,} & sent ^{his} ^{other} ^{swarms} ^{of} ^{officers} ^{to} ^{harrass} ^{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} ^{legislature}

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} ^{constitu-} ^{tions} ^{and} ^{unacknowledged} ^{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 of the benefits of trial by jury;

for transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences;

for abolishing the free system of British laws in a neighboring province, established by their own ^{legislature} ^{and} ^{governors;} ^{and} ^{intending} ^{to} ^{inspire} ⁱⁿ ^{us} ^{the} ^{same} ^{disobedience} ^{to} ^{their} ^{own} ^{laws} ^{as} ^{they} ^{have} ^{shown} ⁱⁿ ^{their} ^{disobedience} ^{to} ^{the} ^{laws} ^{of} ^{Great} ^{Britain;}

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 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

exalted: and we appealed to their native justice & magnanimity [as well as to the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations which were likely to interrupt our correspondence & connection. 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 magistrates to send over not only soldiers of our common blood, but Scotch & foreign mercenaries to invade & deluge our borders: these facts

give the last stab to agonizing affection, and manly spirits bid us to renounce: as if 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, is open to us too; we will stand it on apart from them, and acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our separation & disunion!

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 & renounce all allegiance & subjection to the kings of Great Britain & all others who may hereafter claim by, through, or under them; & a utter 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 hereafter 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.

Original signed by George Washington

1776

a different place

