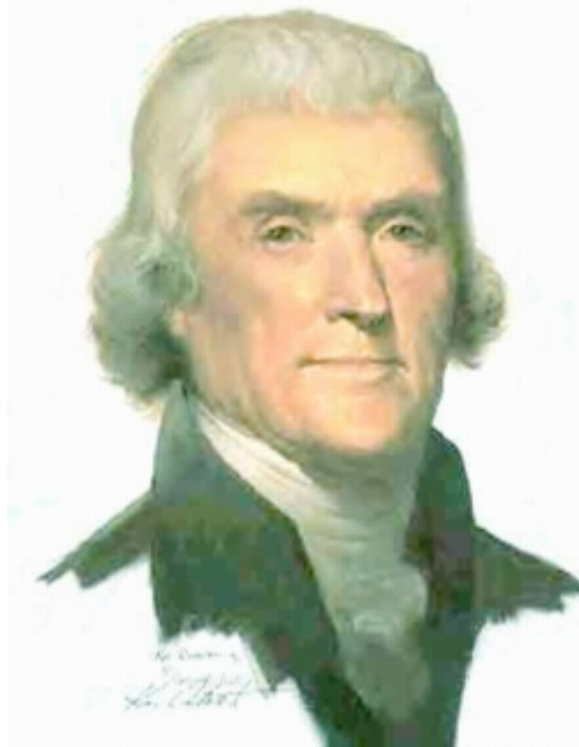


THE BEST OF THE OLL #40

Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence" (1776)
<oll.libertyfund.org/title/2540>

“We hold these Truths to be self evident; that all Men are created equal and independent; that from that equal Creation they derive Rights inherent and unalienable; among which are the Preservation of Life, and Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness; that to secure these Ends, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the governed.”



Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)

The Best of the Online Library of Liberty <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2465>
The Best of Bastiat <oll.libertyfund.org/title/2477>
[June, 2013]

Editor's Introduction

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), a Virginian, was the author of the American Declaration of Independence (1776), an active participant in the Revolution, Governor of Virginia (1779), member of Congress, Minister to France, Secretary of State under President Washington, and president of the United States (1800). He was a polymath who wrote on and was knowledgeable about science, architecture, music, agriculture, law, education, geography, and music.

According to Carl Becker, a committee consisting of Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston was appointed on June 11, 1776 to prepare a declaration of independence from Great Britain. The first version was written by Jefferson and submitted to Franklin for consideration. A second version was called the "Rough Draft" or the "Reported Draft" which included corrections by Franklin and Adams. The final version which was officially promulgated on July 4 was called the "Engrossed" or "Parchment" Copy. We include all three here because they show how Jefferson's original ideas were gradually transformed in committee into what became known as the Declaration of Independence

The most importance differences are the following: the final version is much shorter than either Jefferson's or the committee's draft (some 380 words or 22%); the phrase "Rights inherent and unalienable" was replaced by "certain inalienable rights"; the idea that rights come from "that equal Creation" was replaced with the idea that "their Creator" endows them with rights; that among these rights were "the Preservation of Life, and Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" which is changed to simply "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness"; that the aim of the Declaration is to announce that the People were advancing from a state of "Subordination" to a more "equal and independent Station", which was changed to dissolving "political bands" and assuming a "separate and equal station" "among the powers of the earth"; and most significantly, in the list of grievances against the Crown, three whole paragraphs attacking the trade in and the sale of slaves were removed entirely.

Nevertheless, the Declaration remains one of the founding documents of liberty and is justly commemorated every July 4.

"He has waged cruel War against human Nature itself, violating its most sacred Rights of Life and Liberty in the Persons of a distant People who never offended him, captivating and 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. He has prostituted his Negative for Suppressing every legislative Attempt to prohibit or to restrain an execrable Commerce, determined to keep open a Markett where Men should be bought and 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 their Liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the People upon whom he also obruded 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."

The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)¹

FIRST DRAFT [1]

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 People to advance from that Subordination, in which they have hitherto remained and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the equal and independent 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 impell them to the Change.

“We hold these Truths to be self evident; that all Men are created equal and independent; that from that equal Creation they derive Rights inherent and unalienable; among which are the Preservation of Life, and Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

We hold these Truths to be self evident; that all Men are created equal and independent; that from that equal Creation they derive Rights inherent and unalienable; among which are the Preservation of Life, and Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness; that to secure these Ends, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the governed; that whenever, any form of Government, shall become 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 change 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 distinguish'd Period, and pursuing invariably, the same object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Power, 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 their former Systems of Government. The History of his present Majesty, is a History of unremitting Injuries and Usurpations, among which no one Fact stands Single or Solitary 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, as 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 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 dissolved Representative Houses, repeatedly, and 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—

¹ Thomas Jefferson, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Federal Edition (New York and London, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904-5). Vol. 2. Declaration of Independence. <oll.libertyfund.org/title/755/86068>.

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 suffered the Administration of Justice totally to cease in some of these Colonies, refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made our Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their offices, and amount of their Salaries:

He has created 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 and Ships of War.

He has affected to render the military, independent of, and Superiour 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 pretended Acts of legislation; for quartering large Bodies of armed Troops among us; for protecting them by a Mock Tryal from Punishment for any Murders 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 offenses, for taking away our Charters, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Government; 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, and declaring us, out of his Allegiance and Protection.

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 unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.

He 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 of existence.

He has incited treasonable Insurrections of our Fellow Citizens, with the allurements of Forfeiture and Confiscation of our Property.

“He has waged cruel War against human Nature itself, violating its most sacred Rights of Life and Liberty in the Persons of a distant People who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into Slavery in another Hemisphere.”

He has waged cruel War against human Nature itself, violating its most sacred Rights of Life and Liberty in the Persons of a distant People who never offended him, captivating and 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.

“He has prostituted his Negative for Suppressing every legislative Attempt to prohibit or to restrain an execrable Commerce, determined to keep open a Markett where Men should be bought and sold, and that this assemblage of Horrors might want no Fact of distinguished Die.”

He has prostituted his Negative for Suppressing every legislative Attempt to prohibit or to restrain an execrable Commerce, determined to keep open a Markett where Men should be bought and 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 their 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.

“He is now exciting those very People to rise in Arms among us, and to purchase their 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 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 and fixed in the Principles of Liberty.

Nor have we been wanting in Attentions to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of attempts of their Legislature to extend a Jurisdiction over these our States. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here, no one of which could warrant so strange a Pretension. That these were effected at the expense of our own Blood and 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 and 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 appealed to their Nature,

Justice and Magnanimity, as well as to the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these usurpations, which were likely to interrupt our Correspondence and Connection. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Consanguinity, 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 Magistrate to send over not only soldiers of our common Blood, but Scotch and foreign Mercenaries, to invade and 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 endeavour 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 and a great People together but a Communication of Grandeur and of Freedom it seems is 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, and by the Authority of the good People of these States, reject and renounce all Allegiance and Subjection to the Kings of Great Britain, and all others, who may hereafter claim by, through, or under them; We utterly dissolve and break off, all political Connection which may have heretofore subsisted between us and 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 and independent States they shall hereafter have 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, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our Sacred Honour.

“And for the Support of this Declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our Sacred Honour.”

REPORTED DRAFT

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 inherent & inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inherent & inalienable 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 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 and 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 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; but 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 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 and continually for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the right 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 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 the administration of justice totally to cease in some of these states, 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 by a self assumed power 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 and 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 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 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, and declaring us out of his allegiance and protection.

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 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, and conditions of existence.

He has incited treasonable insurrections of our fellow-citizens, with the allurements of forfeiture and confiscation of our property:

He has constrained others, 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 waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of distant people, who never offended him, captivating and 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.”

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of distant people, who never offended him, captivating and 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 and 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 crime 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 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 and undisguised for tyranny over a people fostered and fixed in the principles of freedom.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time to attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over these our states. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here, no one of which could warrant so strange a pretension: that these were effected at the expence of our own blood and treasure, unassisted by the wealth or strength of Great Britain: that in constituting indeed our several forms of government, we had adopted a common king, thereby laying a foundation for perpetual league and amity with them: but that submission to their parliament was no part of our constitution nor ever in idea, if history be credited; and we have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, as well as to the ties of our common kindred, to disavow these usurpations which were likely to interrupt our connection and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity, 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 elections re-established them in power. At this very time they are permitting their chief magistrate to send over not only soldiers of our own blood, but Scotch and other foreign mercenaries, to invade and destroy us. These facts have given the last stab to agonizing affections, and manly spirit bids us to renounce forever these unfeeling brethren. We must endeavor to forget our former love for them, to hold them as we hold the rest of mankind enemies in war, in peace friends.

We might have been a free and a great people together; but a communication of grandeur and of freedom it seems, is 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 in General Congress assembled in the name and by authority of the good people of these states, reject and renounce all allegiance and 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 and the people or parliament of Great Britain, and finally we do assert and declare these colonies to be free and independant, and that as free and independant 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 we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour.

“We might have been a free and a great people together; but a communication of grandeur and of freedom it seems, is 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!”

ENGROSSED COPY

In Congress, July 4, 1776. The Unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America.

“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.”

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 inalienable 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 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 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.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable 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.”

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 meantime, 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, totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has excited domestic insurrection among 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.

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.

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.

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 connection 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.

“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.”

Notes

[1] The text in the first column is from a copy in the handwriting of John Adams, now in the Adams papers at Quincy, for which I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams and Mr. Theodore F. Dwight. From a comparison of it with the facsimile of Jefferson's rough draft, it is evident that it represents the first phrasing of the paper. The text in the second column is approximately that reported by the committee to Congress, and is taken from Jefferson's rough draft reproduced herein in facsimile from the original in the Department of State. The text in the third column is from the engrossed copy of the Declaration of Independence, also in the Department of State. Another MSS. copy in Jefferson's writing, slightly altered in wording, was inserted by him in his Autobiography, and is printed, *ante*, 1, 35. This is in the Department of State, as is likewise a copy in his handwriting made for Madison in 1783, which is reproduced in facsimile in the *Madison Papers*, vol. iii. Between July 4th-10th, Jefferson made copies of the Declaration, indicating his phrasing and that adopted by the Congress, and sent them to R. H. Lee, Wythe, Page, Pendleton, and Mazzei, and probably others. Lee gave his copy to the American Philosophical Society, where it now is. Those of Wythe, Page, and Pendleton have never been heard of. Mazzei gave his to the Countess de Tessie of France, and it has not been traced. A copy in Jefferson's writing is now owned by Dr. Thomas Addis Emmett, and a fragment of another is in the possession of Mrs. Washburn of Boston. Thus at least five copies and a fragment of a sixth are still extant.—*Cf. ante*, vol. i., 35.

Further Information

SOURCE

The edition used for this extract: Thomas Jefferson, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Federal Edition (New York and London, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904-5). Vol. 2. Declaration of Independence. <oll.libertyfund.org/title/755/86068>.

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FURTHER READING

Other works by Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) <oll.libertyfund.org/person/3777>.

School of Thought: The Founding Fathers of the U.S. Constitution <oll.libertyfund.org/collection/36>.

See also Carl Lotus Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study on the History of Political Ideas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922). Chapter IV: Drafting the Declaration. <oll.libertyfund.org/title/1177/208850>.

“The distinctive principle of Western social philosophy is individualism. It aims at the creation of a sphere in which the individual is free to think, to choose, and to act without being restrained by the interference of the social apparatus of coercion and oppression, the State.”
[Ludwig von Mises, “Liberty and Property” (1958)]



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