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Declaration of Independence: A Transcription

Note: The following text is a transcription of the Stone Engraving of the parchment Declaration of Independence (the document on display in the Rotunda at the National Archives Museum.) The spelling and punctuation reflects the original.

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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.

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

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of Homerica,

	Wher in the Course of human ex	vents, it becomes necessary for one	people to disolve the political be	ands which have connected	I them with another, and to
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with certain unal unable Rights, that a	among these are Life, Liberty and H.	be pursuit of Happinels _ 3	that to fecure these lights , Gover	nments are instituted an	mong Men , deriving their just
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pass other Laws for the accommodation of	large districts of people, unless those for	reople would relinquish the rig	ht of Representation in the Leg	estature, a right ineffim	able tothem and formedable
to hyrants only He has called to	together legislative bodies at places unu	isual, uncomfortable, and dist	int from the depository of their	Public Records, for the s	sole flurpose of faliguing them into
compliance with his meafures	He has desolved Represtative House	ses repeatedly, for opposing wir	h manly firmness his invasion	s on the rights of the fleon	le su nas refuseu joi
along time, after such dipolations, to causing in the mean time exposed to all the de	use others to be elected; whereby the Le	gislative flowers, incapable of	Annihilation , have returned to	The People at large for	their exercise; the state remain
ing in the mean time exposed to all the de	angus of invasion from without, and	convulsions within !	He has endeavoured to preven	the population of these	States; for that purpose obstruc-
ting the Law for Naturalization of Foruge	ners; refusing topals others to encourage	e their migrations hither, and	raising the conditions of new U	ppropriations of Lands.	su nas ovonuceu me
administration of Justice, by refusing his	Usent to Laws for establishing Judicu	my flowers He ha	s made judges dependent on t	us Will alone, for the line	ire of their offices, and me amount
and payment of their salaries	He has exected a multitude of New Of	fices, and sent hether fevarms	of Oficers to harrags our fleofile	, and eat out their fuesta	nee - He has kept among
us, in times of peace, Standing armus we	thout the Consent of our legislatures	He has affected to render	the Mulitary independent of ar	ed superior to the level fl	ower He has comoined
with others to subject us to a jurisdiction f	orugn to our constitution, and unack	enowledged by our laws; give	ng has Usent to their Ucis of p	relended Legislation: _	For quartering large vodies of
armed troops among us : - Nor protect	ing them, by a mock theat, from flur	ushment for any Murders w.	such they should committee	the Inhabitants of these	e olates :- Our culling of
our Frade with all parts of the world : -	- For imposing Jaces on us with ou	it our Consent: _ Nor depri	ving us in many cases, of the	benefits of Ireal by Jury	y: _ Nor transporting us beyond
Seas to be tried for pretended offences :	For abolishing the fee System of the	nglish Laws in a nughbouring	g Fromnee, establishing thereis	an Urbitrary governme	int, and enlarging its Mountains
so as to render il at once an example and	fit influment for inhoducing the sa	me absolute rule into these	olonies : Nor taking au	ay our Charles, aboushi	ing our most valuable saws, and
altering fundamentally the Forms of our	Governments: _ For suspending	our own Legistatures, and de	claring themselves invested w	rth power to legislate for	or us in all cases whatsoever -
All has abdicated Government here , by	declaring us out office Protection and	waging War against us	He has plundered our seas, r	avaged our boasts, burnt	our towns, and deshoyed the sives
of our fleople . The is at this time he	ansporting large Urmies of foreign Mer.	cenaries to compleat the works of	death, desolation and hyranny	, already begun with cir	cumstances of bruelly offerfray
fearely paralleled in the most barbarous age	s, and totally unworthy the Head of	revelezed nation He	has conshained our fellow City	ens taken captive on the	high veas covear cirms against
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their bountry , to become the executioners of the inhabitants of our portiers, the merciles Ind	in friends and Brethren, or to fall the lian Savages, whose known rule of wa	mselves by their Hands considered de	He has excited Armestic infu struction of all ages, fexes and co	nditions amongst us, and inditions. In every	has endeavoured to bring on the stage of these Oppressions We
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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 mean time 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 harrass 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 & 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 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.

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 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.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish 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

connections 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.

Georgia

Button Gwinnett

Lyman Hall

George Walton

North Carolina

William Hooper

Joseph Hewes

John Penn

South Carolina

Edward Rutledge

Thomas Heyward, Jr.

Thomas Lynch, Jr.

Arthur Middleton

Massachusetts

John Hancock

Maryland

Samuel Chase

William Paca

Thomas Stone

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia

George Wythe

Richard Henry Lee

Thomas Jefferson

Benjamin Harrison

Thomas Nelson, Jr.

Francis Lightfoot Lee

Carter Braxton

Pennsylvania

Robert Morris

Benjamin Rush

Benjamin Franklin

John Morton

George Clymer

James Smith

George Taylor

James Wilson

George Ross

Delaware

Caesar Rodney

George Read

Thomas McKean

New York

William Floyd

Philip Livingston

Francis Lewis

Lewis Morris

New Jersey

Richard Stockton

John Witherspoon

Francis Hopkinson

John Hart

Abraham Clark

New Hampshire

Josiah Bartlett

William Whipple

Massachusetts

Samuel Adams

John Adams

Robert Treat Paine

Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island

Stephen Hopkins

William Ellery

Connecticut

Roger Sherman

Samuel Huntington

William Williams

Oliver Wolcott

New Hampshire

Matthew Thornton

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