

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 bonds 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.

*GEORGE III.
1760–1820

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 these 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 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 & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

*"HESSIANS"

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 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 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.

THE SIGNERS

1. JOHN ADAMS, of Massachusetts (1735–1826) teacher, lawyer, statesman, vice president, and president of the United States
2. SAMUEL ADAMS, of Massachusetts (1722–1803) political leader, and patriot
3. JOSIAH BARTLETT, of New Hampshire (1729–1795) physician, patriot, chief justice, and governor of New Hampshire
4. CARTER BRAXTON, of Virginia (1736–1797) planter, and statesman
5. CHARLES CARROLL, of Maryland (1737–1832) landowner, lawyer, and patriot
6. SAMUEL CHASE, of Maryland (1741–1811) lawyer, patriot, and justice of the U.S. Supreme Court
7. ABRAHAM CLARK, of New Jersey (1726–1794) surveyor, lawyer, farmer, and patriot
8. GEORGE CLYMER, of Pennsylvania (1739–1813) merchant, and patriot
9. WILLIAM ELLERY, of Rhode Island (1727–1820) merchant, judge, state senator, deputy governor, and patriot
10. WILLIAM FLOYD, of New York (1734–1821) farmer, landed proprietor, and patriot
11. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, of Pennsylvania (1706–1790) printer, author, publisher, businessman, diplomat, inventor, philosopher, and statesman
12. ELBRIDGE GERRY, of Massachusetts (1744–1814) merchant, statesman, governor of Massachusetts, vice president of the United States
13. BUTTON GWINNETT, of Georgia (1735–1777) merchant, governor of Georgia, and patriot
14. LYMAN HALL, of Georgia (1724–1790) minister, doctor, patriot, and governor of Georgia
15. JOHN HANCOCK, of Massachusetts (1737–1793) merchant, patriot, politician, and governor of Massachusetts
16. BENJAMIN HARRISON V., of Virginia (1726–1791) statesman, governor of Virginia, and tobacco farmer
17. JOHN HART, of New Jersey (1708–1779) farmer, and patriot

18. JOSEPH WORTH HEWES, of North Carolina (1730–1779) quaker, merchant, and patriot
19. THOMAS HEYWARD, JR., of South Carolina (1746–1809) lawyer, statesman, landowner, and soldier
20. WILLIAM HOOPER, of North Carolina (1742–1790) lawyer, and patriot
21. STEPHEN HOPKINS, of Rhode Island (1707–1785) colonial governor, educator, judge, merchant, and patriot
22. FRANCIS HOPKINSON, of New Jersey (1737–1791) lawyer, statesman, author, musician, and patriot
23. SAMUEL HUNTINGTON, of Connecticut (1731–1796) lawyer, and patriot
24. THOMAS JEFFERSON, of Virginia (1743–1826) architect, lawyer, politician, statesman, vice president, and president of the United States
25. FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT LEE, of Virginia (1734–1797) farmer, politician, and patriot
26. RICHARD HENRY LEE, of Virginia (1732–1794) politician, patriot, plantation owner, and statesman
27. FRANCIS LEWIS, of New York (1713–1802) merchant, and patriot
28. PHILIP LIVINGSTON, of New York (1716–1778) merchant, philanthropist, and statesman
29. THOMAS LYNCH, JR., of South Carolina (1749–1779) patriot, and farmer
30. THOMAS MCKEAN, of Delaware (1734–1817) lawyer, chief justice, and governor of Pennsylvania
31. ARTHUR MIDDLETON, of South Carolina (1742–1787) patriot, and plantation owner
32. LEWIS MORRIS, of New York (1726–1798) lord of the manor of Morrisania, major-general of the Militia, and patriot
33. ROBERT MORRIS, of Pennsylvania (1734–1806) merchant, financier, patriot, and statesman
34. JOHN MORTON, of Pennsylvania (c. 1724–1777) surveyor, farmer, judge, and patriot
35. THOMAS NELSON, JR., of Virginia (1738–1789) merchant, soldier, general, and governor of Virginia
36. WILLIAM PACA, of Maryland (1740–1799) jurist, patriot, and governor of Maryland
37. ROBERT TREAT PAINE, of Massachusetts (1731–1814) puritan, jurist, and patriot
38. JOHN PENN, of North Carolina (1741–1788) lawyer, and patriot
39. GEORGE READ, of Delaware (1733–1798) lawyer, and statesman
40. CAESAR RODNEY, of Delaware (1728–1784) patriot, statesman, major-general, and colonel of the Delaware militia

41. GEORGE ROSS, of Pennsylvania (1730–1779) jurist, and patriot
42. BENJAMIN RUSH, of Pennsylvania (1745–1813) physician, humanitarian, and patriot
43. EDWARD RUTLEDGE, of South Carolina (1749–1800) lawyer, patriot, and governor of South Carolina
44. ROGER SHERMAN, of Connecticut (1721–1793) lawyer, merchant, writer, and statesman
45. JAMES SMITH, of Pennsylvania (1713–1806) lawyer, surveyor, and patriot
46. RICHARD STOCKTON, of New Jersey (1730–1781) lawyer, and patriot
47. THOMAS STONE, of Maryland (1743–1787) lawyer, and patriot
48. GEORGE TAYLOR, of Pennsylvania (1716?–1781) ironmonger, and patriot
49. CHARLES THOMSON, of Ireland (1729–1824) teacher, merchant, author, patriot, and secretary of the Continental Congress and the Confederation Congress
50. MATTHEW THORNTON, of New Hampshire (1714–1803) physician, and loyalist turned patriot
51. GEORGE WALTON, of Georgia (1741–1804) lawyer, patriot, and governor of Georgia
52. WILLIAM WHIPPLE, of New Hampshire (1730–1785) seaman, merchant, and patriot
53. WILLIAM WILLIAMS, of Connecticut (1731–1811) merchant, and patriot
54. JAMES WILSON, of Pennsylvania (1742–1798) congressman, Supreme Court justice, and speculator
55. JOHN WITHERSPOON, of New Jersey (1723–1794) reverend, doctor, educator, clergyman, writer, and patriot
56. OLIVER WOLCOTT, of Connecticut (1726–1797) lawyer, judge, and patriot
57. GEORGE WYTHE, of Virginia (1726–1806) lawyer, educator, and patriot

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DELLA GRAY BARTHELMAS: *The Signers of the Declaration of Independence. A biographical and genealogical reference.* – Jefferson (North Carolina) and London 1997.

Verwandtschaftsbeziehungen zwischen den UNTERZEICHNERN und ihren Familien

JOHN und SAMUEL ADAMS waren Vettern 2. Grades.

JOHN ADAMS und seine Frau Abigail Adams waren Cousins.

JOSIAH BARTLETT heiratete seine Cousine Mary Bartlett.

CARTER BRAXTONS Mutter Mary Carter, BENJAMIN HARRISONs Mutter Anne Carter und THOMAS NELSONs Großmutter Elizabeth Carter, waren Schwestern.

CARTER BRAXTONS Frau Elizabeth Corbin war eine Cousine von Elizabeth Bassett, der Frau von BENJAMIN HARRISON.

Elizabeth Corbin war eine Cousine von FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT und RICHARD HENRY LEE.

CHARLES CARROLL und seine Frau Mary Darnall waren Cousins.

ABRAHAM CLARK und seine Frau Sarah Hatfield waren Cousins.

WILLIAM ELLERY und seine zweite Frau Abigail Carey waren Cousins 2. Grades.

ELBRIDGE GERRYS Frau Ann Thompson war eine Nichte von LEWIS MORRIS Frau Mary Walton.

LYMAN HALLS Ur-Urgroßvater Nicholas Street heiratete in dritter Ehe Mary NN, Witwe von Francis Newman. Mary NN heiratete – als seine dritte Frau – John Leete, den Stief-Ur-Urgroßvater von Laura Collins, der Frau von OLIVER WOLCOTT.

STEPHEN HOPKINS und seine zweite Frau Ann Smith waren Cousins.

FRANCIS HOPKINSON und THOMAS MCKEAN heirateten die Schwestern Mary und Anne Borden.

JOHN HANCOCKS Frau Dorothy Quincy und JOHN ADAMS Frau Abigail Smith waren Cousinen.

BENJAMIN HARRISON und seine Frau Elizabeth Bassett waren Cousins.

THOMAS JEFFERSON und Lucy Grymes, Frau von THOMAS NELSON, waren Cousins.

BENJAMIN HARRISONs Bruder heiratete THOMAS JEFFERSONs Tante Susanna Randolph.

BENJAMIN HARRISONs Schwester Elizabeth heiratete Peyton Randolph, den Bruder von THOMAS JEFFERSONs Mutter Jane Randolph.

FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT LEE und seine Frau Rebecca Tayloe waren Cousins.

Rebecca Tayloe war auch Cousine von RICHARD HENRY LEE.

THOMAS NELSONs Frau Lucy Grymes war die Tochter von Philip Grymes und Mary Randolph, der Tante THOMAS JEFFERSONs. Sie war außerdem die Nichte von THOMAS JEFFERSONs Großvater Isham Randolph.

ROBERT TREAT PAINE und ROGER SHERMAN waren Vettern.

GEORGE READ heiratete Gertrude Ross, die Schwester von GEORGE ROSS.

BENJAMIN RUSH heiratete Julia Stockton, die Tochter von RICHARD STOCKTON.

EDWARD RUTLEDGE heiratete in erster Ehe Henrietta Middleton, die Schwester von Edward Middleton. In zweiter Ehe heiratete er die Witwe Mary Shubrick.

Mary Shubricks Schwester Elizabeth heiratete THOMAS LYNCH JR.

Ihre Schwester Hannah Shubrick heiratete William Heyward, den Bruder von THOMAS HEYWARD JR.

WILLIAM WHIPPLE und seine Frau Catherine Moffat waren Cousins.

WILLIAM WILLIAMS Frau Mary Trumbull war eine Verwandte von JOHN ADAMS, OLIVER WOLCOTT und von Ann Remington, der ersten Frau von WILLIAM ELLERY.

JAMES WILSON heiratete Rachel Bird.

Ihr Bruder heiratete GEORGE READS Schwester.

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