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The Declaration of Independence

Thomas Jefferson's Draft

Thomas Jefferson, 1776

THOMAS JEFERSON'S HANDWRITTEN DRAFT

The following four images are from engravings taken from the Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence in his handwriting with some ammendations and changes in the handrwriting of Benjamin Franklin and John Adams. Click on the enlarge button to view the image in full-size.

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} ~~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} ~~sacred & undeniable~~; that all men are created equal & independent; that ^{they are endowed by their creator with equal} ~~from that equal creation they derive~~ ~~certain~~ ^{unalienable} rights; that among ^{these} ~~which~~ are ~~the~~ ~~pursuit~~ of life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these ^{rights} ~~ends~~, 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 & organising 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 [began at a distinguished period, &] pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to ~~reduce~~ ^{bring} them ~~to 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 ^{alter} ~~change~~ their former systems of government. the history of ^{the} ~~these~~ present ^{the} ~~Kingdom~~ ^{King of Great Britain} is a history of ^{repeated} ~~unnumbered~~ injuries and usurpations, [among which, ^{appears no solitary fact} ~~appears no solitary fact~~ ^{but all} ~~appear~~ ^{having} ~~to~~ ~~contradict~~ the uniform tenor of the rest, ^{all of which} ~~have~~ ^{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]

* Dr. Franklin's handwriting

* Mr. Adams's handwriting

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~~ 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 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 refused~~, he has refused for a long ^{time after such dissolutions} ^{* Mr Adams} 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:

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 ^{obstructed} ~~suffered~~ the administration of justice ^{totally} to cease in some of these ^{states} ~~provinces~~ 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} amount of their salaries. ^{+ Dr Franklin}

he has erected a multitude of new offices ^[by a self-assumed power] & sent hither swarms of officers to harass 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} ^{legislatures}

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 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 it's borders, so as to render it at once an example & fit instrument for introducing the same also elsewhere.

† 87 Franklin

abolishing our most ^{valuable} ~~important~~ laws
for taking away our charters, & 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 & waging 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
^{scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages and totally}
of cruelty & perfidy, unworthy the head of a civilized nation:
^{he has endeavored to excite domestic insurrections 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

<sup>he has constrained others to take arms against the high seas to buy arms against their country, to take
arms to defend themselves, or to fall themselves into the hands of their enemies, to become the companions of their friends, or to
be the subjects of their enemies.</sup>
allurements of forfeiture & confiscation of our property,
he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sa-

-ved rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never of-
fended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemis-
-sphere, 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
determining to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold:
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
amongus, 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.]

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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 ^{free} [who mean to be free] future ages will scarce believe
that the hardiness of one man, adventured within the short compass of twelve years
to ^{lay} a foundation for broad & undiguised, for tyranny
only, ~~of tyranny with a right~~, 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 ^{an unwarlike} extend a jurisdiction over ^{us} 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, 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 ^{if we have compared them} [as well as to] 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 [if ^{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} ~~and~~ ^{T. St. Brantford} ~~us~~. 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 ^{to glory} ~~to glory~~ & happiness, is open to us too; we will ~~leave~~ ^{must tread} it ^{apart from them}, and ^{we must tread} acquiesce in the necessity which ^{and hold them as we hold the rest of mankind enemies in war, in peace friends} ~~pronounces our~~ ^{de-} ~~separation~~ ^{separation!} ~~separation!~~

We therefore the representatives of the United States of America in General Congress assembled, ^{appealing to the righteous judge of the world for the rectitude of our intention} do in the name & by authority of the good people of these ^{colonies} [states] [reject and renounce all allegiance & subjection to the kings of Great Britain ^{a different than} & all others who may hereafter claim by, through, or under them; we utterly ^{solely inserted} dissolve & ~~break off~~ all political connection which may ~~have~~ ^{have} ~~subsisted~~ ^{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~~ ^{full} ~~have~~ ^{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.