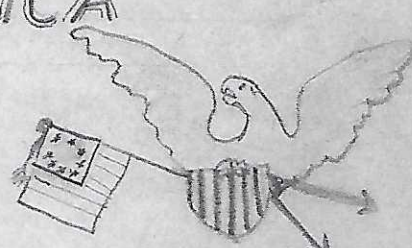


105



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 foundations on such Principles, and organizing it in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to bring forth the 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 they are oppressed, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, invariably the same, 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 is the history of the United States. — Such is the history of the present King of Great Britain. — Such is the 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 unwholesome and necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his Governors and Judges to suspend or press any important law unless suspended and in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and for the districts of a people, unless those people would relinquish the privilege of representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable and inalienable to Tyrants only. He has called for the Legislature, in places unusual, inconvenient, 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 for a long time, after such Their exercise, the State remaining in the same time exposed to all the dangers of invasions from without, and of dissensions within. He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States, by refusing to 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 our substance. He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing Armies, without the Consent of our Legislature. He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the civil powers. 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 mock Trials, from punishment for any murder which they should have committed 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 arbitrarily governed, and enlarging its boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same oppressive 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 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 commit the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and 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 executors of their Friends and brethren, to fall themselves by their hands. He has excited domestic insurrections among us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of war Fare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, and sexes, and conditions. In every stage of oppression, 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 attention 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 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 common Kindness. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, that denounces our separations, and thus we are now united to 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 the 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 connections between them and the State of Great Britain, are and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude Peace, contract Alliance, enter into Commerce, and to do all other acts and things which Independent States may of right do, and do, in 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.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and constitute this Constitution for the United States of America.

[illegible]