

The Declaration of Independence

What principles of government are expressed in the Declaration of Independence?

Introduction

The battles at Lexington and Concord marked the start of the fighting that would lead the colonies to declare their independence from Great Britain. The day after the clashes, horseback riders galloped through the colonies with news of the “barbarous murders” of innocent militiamen, leaving most Americans deeply appalled. More urgently than ever, they **debated** what to do about Great Britain.

For many colonists, the two choices were clear as day. The colonies could declare their independence, or they could continue to use protests and petitions, or formal requests, to sway the minds of King George and the Parliament of Great Britain. This second choice would keep the colonies at peace, but at what cost to the colonists' freedom?

No one was more outspoken in his support for independence than Patrick Henry of Virginia, who delivered one of the most famous speeches in American history to the Virginia House of Burgesses. “There is no longer any room for hope,” he began. “If we wish to be free . . . we must fight! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston. The war is inevitable—and let it come!”

Then Henry spoke to those who treasured peace above freedom:

Gentlemen may cry, Peace, peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun. The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! . . . What is it that gentlemen wish? . . . Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

Despite the passionate words of Patriots like Henry, most colonists remained unsure about separating from Great Britain. In this lesson, you will learn how the fighting led many to decide to declare independence.

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Social Studies Vocabulary

Common Sense

Declaration of Independence

independence

natural rights

petition

1. The Colonists Organize an Army

On May 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia. By then, New England militia had amassed around Boston. The first question facing Congress was who should command this “New England army.” The obvious answer was a New Englander.

George Washington and the Continental Army John Adams of Massachusetts had another idea. He proposed that Congress create a “Continental army” made up of troops from all the colonies. To lead this army, Adams nominated “a Gentleman whose Skill and Experience as an Officer, whose . . . great Talents and excellent universal Character, would [unite] the colonies better than any other person” alive. That man was George Washington of Virginia, who had distinguished himself in the French and Indian War.

The delegates agreed. They unanimously elected Washington to be commander in chief of the new Continental army.

The Battle of Bunker Hill Meanwhile, militiamen near Boston made plans to fortify two hills that overlooked the city: Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill. On the night of June 16, 1775, Israel Putnam led a few hundred men up Breed's Hill, where they furiously dug for four hours in order to erect a crude fort on the top of the hill.

The fort was concerning to British general William Howe, who had just arrived from England with fresh troops, so he ordered an immediate attack. Under a hot June sun, about 2,000 British troops formed two long lines at the base of Breed's Hill, and, at Howe's order, the redcoats marched up the slope.

As the lines moved ever closer, Putnam ordered his men, “Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes.” When the British were almost on top of them, Putnam sent out the order for the militiamen to open fire. The red lines of British soldiers broke and fell back in confusion.

The British regrouped and attacked again before the Americans stopped their advances once more. On their third attack, the redcoats finally took the hill—but only because the Americans had used up all their gunpowder and retreated.

This clash, which became known as the Battle of Bunker Hill, was short but incredibly bloody. More than 1,000 British troops and nearly half that many Americans were killed or wounded in the conflict.

General Washington Takes Command Shortly after the Battle of Bunker Hill, George Washington took command of his new army made up of “a mixed multitude of people . . . under very little discipline,

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order, or government.” Washington worked hard to **impose** order. One man wrote, “Everyone is made to know his place and keep in it . . . It is surprising how much work has been done.”

A month later, however, a dismayed Washington learned that the army had only 36 barrels of gunpowder—enough for each soldier to fire just nine shots. To deceive the British, Washington started a rumor in Boston that he had 1,800 barrels of gunpowder—more than he knew what to do with! Luckily, the British believed the rumor, giving Washington time to send desperate letters to the colonies begging for gunpowder.

Washington got his powder, but he still didn't have the strength to attack the British forces in Boston. To do that he needed artillery—heavy guns, such as cannons—to bombard their defenses. In desperation, Washington sent a Boston bookseller named Henry Knox to Fort Ticonderoga to round up some big guns.

Ticonderoga was an old British fort located at the southern end of Lake Champlain in New York. A few months earlier, militiamen led by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold had seized the fort, and while the Americans had little use for the run-down fort, its guns would prove priceless.

As winter set in, Knox loaded 59 cannons onto huge sleds and dragged them 300 miles to Boston. Knox's 42 sleds also carried 2,300 pounds of lead for making bullets. Boston was about to be under siege by the Americans.

The British Abandon Boston On March 4, 1776, the British soldiers in Boston awoke to a frightening sight. The ridges of nearby Dorchester Heights, which had been bare the night before, now bristled with cannons, all aimed at the city.

Rather than risk another battle, General Howe abandoned the city. Within days, more than a hundred ships left Boston Harbor for Canada carrying 9,000 British troops as well as 1,100 Loyalists who preferred to leave their homes behind rather than live with rebels.

Some Americans hoped that the victory in Boston meant that the war was over. Washington, however, knew it was only the beginning.



2. On the Eve of Independence

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Nearly a year passed between the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord and the British retreat from Boston. During that time, there was little talk of **independence**. Most colonists still considered themselves loyal British subjects, and they believed their quarrel was not with Great Britain itself but with its **policies** toward the colonies.

The Olive Branch Petition Many Americans pinned their hopes for peace on King George. In July 1775, the Second Continental Congress sent a **petition** to George III asking him to end the quarrel. John Adams called the petition an “olive branch,” which is an ancient symbol of peace.

By the time the petition reached London, however, the king had declared the colonies to be in “open and avowed Rebellion.” He ordered his ministers “to bring the Traitors to Justice.”

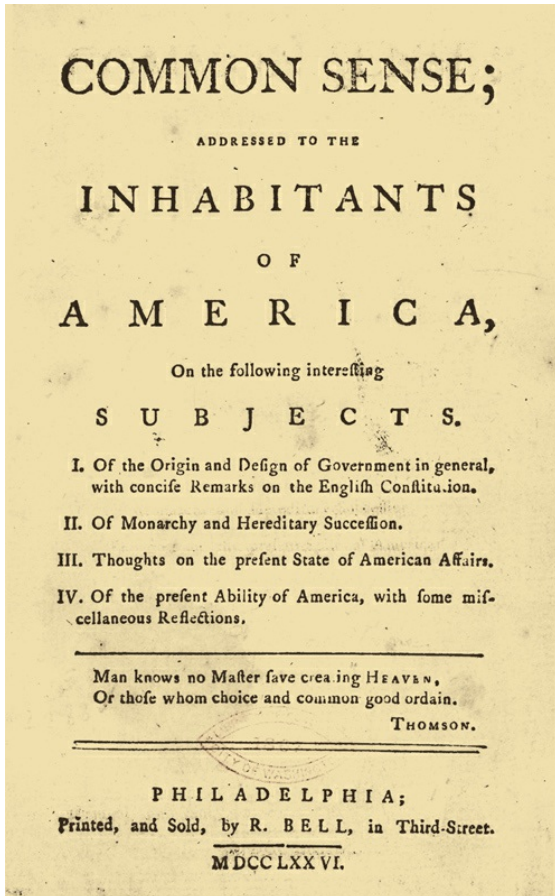
Being called a traitor was enough to change the mind of one of Washington's generals, who confessed that he had long “looked with some degree of horror on the scheme of separation.” Now he agreed with Patrick Henry that colonists “must be Independent or Slaves.”

Common Sense Many colonists, however, still looked with horror at the idea of independence. Then, early in 1776, a Patriot named Thomas Paine published a fiery pamphlet entitled **Common Sense** in which he scoffed at the idea that Americans owed any loyalty to King George. “Of more worth is one honest man to society,” he wrote, “than all the crowned ruffians who ever lived.”

Paine also attacked the argument that the colonies' ties to Great Britain had benefited Americans. Just the opposite was true, he said. American trade had suffered under British control, and Americans had also been hurt by being dragged into Great Britain's European wars.

Paine ended with a vision of an independent America as a homeland of liberty. “Ye that love mankind!” he urged. “Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! . . . The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth.”

Within a few months, more than 120,000 copies of *Common Sense* were printed in the colonies. Paine's arguments helped persuade thousands of colonists that independence was not only sensible, but that it was the key to a brighter future.



3. Thomas Jefferson Drafts a Declaration

A few weeks after the British left Boston, the Second Continental Congress appointed a committee to write a declaration, or formal statement, of independence. The task of drafting the **Declaration of Independence** went to the committee's youngest member, 33-year old Thomas Jefferson of Virginia. A shy man, Jefferson said little in Congress, but he stated his ideas brilliantly in writing.

Jefferson's job was to explain to the world why the colonies were choosing to separate from Britain. "When in the Course of human events," he began, if one group of people finds it necessary to break its ties with another, "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" requires that they explain their actions.

Principles on Which to Base a New Government Jefferson's explanation was simple but revolutionary. Loyalists had argued that colonists had a duty to obey the king, whose authority came from God. Jefferson reasoned quite differently. He based his arguments on the principle of **natural rights**, the idea that all people are born equal in

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God's sight and thus are all entitled to the same basic rights. In Jefferson's **eloquent** words,

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.

Governments are formed, Jefferson said, “to secure these rights,” and their power to rule comes from “the consent of the governed.” If a government fails to protect people's **fundamental** rights, “it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it.” The people can then create a new government that will protect “their Safety and Happiness.”

The King's Crimes King George, Jefferson continued, had shown no concern for the rights of colonists. Instead, the king's policies had been aimed at establishing “an absolute Tyranny over these States” (the colonies).

As evidence, Jefferson included a long list of the king's abuses against the colonists. In all these actions, Jefferson claimed, George III had demonstrated that he was “unfit to be the ruler of a free people.”

The time had come, Jefferson concluded, for the colonies' ties to Great Britain to be broken. “These United Colonies are,” he declared, “and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States.”



4. The Final Break

On July 1, 1776, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia's State House to debate independence. By noon, the temperature outside had soared into the nineties, and a thunderstorm was gathering. Inside the State House, emotions were equally hot and stormy. By the end of the day, the issue was still undecided.

The next day was cooler and calmer. On July 2, all but one of the 13 colonies voted for independence, New York casting no vote.

No delegate was more excited about the colonies' decision than John Adams. In a letter to his wife Abigail, Adams wrote, "The second Day of July . . . will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, with Pomp and Parade, with Shews (shows), Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations, from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more."

Debate over Slavery Adams was wrong about the date that would be celebrated as America's birthday, but only because Congress

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decided to revise Jefferson's declaration. The delegates liked most of what they read, except for a passage on slavery. Jefferson had charged King George with violating the "sacred rights of life and liberty . . . of a distant people [by] carrying them into slavery."

Almost no one liked this passage. Many southerners feared that it might lead to demands to free the slaves because enslaved Africans provided much of the labor used on southern farms. Slave trade was very profitable and many colonial merchants built fortunes trading in human beings. Northerners worried that these New England merchants might be offended. Even delegates who opposed slavery felt it was unfair to blame the king for enslaving Africans. This passage was removed from the document.



Independence Day On July 4, the delegates approved a final version of the Declaration of Independence. When they signed the document, they pledged to support independence with "our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

This was a serious pledge because every signer understood that by

signing he was committing an act of treason against Great Britain. If the new nation failed to win its freedom, each of them could very well end up swinging from a hangman's rope. Knowing this, Benjamin Franklin told the delegates, "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."



Lesson Summary

In this lesson, you read how the American colonies took the dramatic step of declaring their independence.

The Colonists Organize an Army George Washington took command of the Continental Army after the Battle of Bunker Hill. The Continental Army used cannons brought from Fort Ticonderoga in New York to force the British to abandon Boston in March 1776.

On the Eve of Independence The failure of the Olive Branch Petition and the success of Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* moved the colonies closer to the decision to declare independence from Great Britain.

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Thomas Jefferson Drafts a Declaration Thomas Jefferson, a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, was selected to write the Declaration of Independence.

The Final Break On July 4, 1776, the delegates approved the Declaration of Independence. For the first time in history, a government was being established on the principle of people's natural rights and the duty of government to honor those rights.



Investigating Primary Sources

How Did *Common Sense* Create Tension in the Colonies?

In 1776, many American colonists were reluctant to abandon their British citizenship. Historians argue that a pamphlet called *Common Sense*, written by Thomas Paine, was responsible for convincing many Americans to turn against the British king and walk away from their British citizenship. You will study four primary sources about the pamphlet and make an argument to explain how *Common Sense* created tension in the colonies.

Independence from Britain did not come easily to Americans. There were battles to fight, a declaration of independence to write, and thousands of colonists to convince that independence would give them a better life. Committees of Correspondence communicated revolutionary sentiments and actions throughout the colonies, but even as the first battles took place, many Americans still expressed loyalty to the British king and were unwilling to speak out against their

monarch.

A passionate writer named Thomas Paine was not afraid to speak out. In 1775, he began writing a pamphlet called *Common Sense*, which used everyday language and familiar religious references to persuade Americans to form an independent republic.

When Paine's pamphlet was published in 1776, many Americans praised him for voicing their disappointment with an unfair government that ruled from across the ocean. Supporters of independence for the colonies were called Patriots, but not all colonists were Patriots. People who remained devoted to Britain, called Loyalists or Tories, were horrified by the rants of Paine, whom they viewed as a traitor.

Paine's critics printed this cartoon in Britain in 1793, years after *Common Sense* was released. What is happening to Thomas Paine in the illustration? Read the inscription below the drawing and describe how the illustrator used word play with the meaning of the word pain? Based on this illustration, how did the British feel about Paine and his pamphlet? Who in the colonies might have agreed with the cartoon?

In an effort to get his message across to all colonists in practical terms, Thomas Paine made his arguments in four chapters. In Chapter 1, he described the role of government, namely to serve the desires of the citizens as a whole. In Chapter 2, Paine described monarchy and the problems with rulers passing on their powers within their families. Chapter 3 argued that Britain was not interested in what was best for the colonists, but rather what would help Britain become stronger. And Chapter 4 described the military advantages the colonies had over Britain.

Read this excerpt from Chapter 3 of *Common Sense* and describe what Paine believes should be the primary plan for the colonies. Why does he believe the colonies should separate from Britain? How does he challenge the beliefs of Loyalists in this document? What might persuade colonists to agree or disagree with Paine?

Common Sense

Much hath been said of the united strength of Britain and the Colonies, that in conjunction they might bid defiance to the world: But this is mere presumption; the fate of war is uncertain, neither do the expressions mean anything; for this continent would never suffer itself to be drained of inhabitants, to support the British arms in either Asia, Africa, or Europe.

Besides, what have we to do with setting the world at defiance? Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because it is the interest of all Europe to have America a free port. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver secure her from invaders.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this continent can reap by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge; not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for buy them where we will.

But the injuries and disadvantages which we sustain by that connection, are without number; and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance: because, any submission to, or dependence on, Great Britain, tends directly to involve this Continent in European wars and quarrels, and set us at variance with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship, and against whom we have neither anger nor complaint. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it. It is the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do, while, by her dependance on Britain, she is made the makeweight in the scale of British politics.

—Thomas Paine, 1776

Support for *Common Sense*

In just four months after it was published, more than 120,000 copies of *Common Sense* circulated throughout the colonies. While it failed to persuade some people to demand independence from Britain, thousands of colonists did become convinced to relinquish their loyalty to their king and government and take steps toward becoming citizens of a new republic. Every day, more people felt the need for independence and, in turn, argued their opinions in newspapers, living rooms, and meeting halls.

Examine this letter that appeared in a newspaper in New London, Connecticut. It was written in 1776, just two months after *Common Sense* was published. Which sentences describe how this writer's mind changed about independence? What religious references does the writer use? Describe this writer's feelings about Thomas Paine and how this writer believes *Common Sense* will influence the American colonists. Based on your reading, how do you believe *Common Sense* influenced Patriots in the colonies?

The New-London Gazette

To the Author of the Pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*.

Sir, In declaring your own, you have declared the sentiments of Millions. Your production may justly be compared to a land-flood that sweeps all before it. We were blind, but on reading these enlightening works the scales have fallen from our eyes. Even deep-rooted prejudices take to themselves wings and flee away, tho' not as an eagle towards heaven. The doctrine of Independence hath been in times past greatly disgustful; we abhorred the principle. It is now become our delightful theme and commands our purest affections. We revere the author and highly prize and admire his works. — Indeed, sir, you stand high in the esteem of Americans, and unborn Millions will rise up and call you blessed. America through your means will rise to Glory and Independence, and become the envy as well as the admiration of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Your pamphlet, sir, speaks good things concerning America, and comes freighted with blessings to a distressed and insulted country. Your works, above all other political writings, have this peculiar virtue — they convert Tories and, like Noah's ark, prove a covert for different species of animals. The clean and the unclean, those that divide the hoof and those that do not — like the radii of a circle, may meet in this common center and become one in the great cause of liberty. Should the Honorable the Continental Congress in their great wisdom think as we do, the business would be done — the free and independent states of America fixed on an immovable foundation, and the Congress be held in the highest veneration by MILLIONS.

—Unknown, 1776

On the Other Side

While many colonists agreed with Thomas Paine's powerful pamphlet, which advocated that the colonies would be better off without Britain's rule, there were still many Loyalists who disagreed with Paine's fundamental philosophy. The Reverend Charles Inglis of New York was one such Loyalist. He anonymously wrote a pamphlet in 1776 called *The deceiver unmasked; or, Loyalty and interest united: in answer to a pamphlet entitled Common sense*, in which he attacked Paine and warned the Patriots that their path was doomed.

Read the excerpts from *The deceiver unmasked*. What was Inglis's reaction to Paine's fundamental concept of government? How does Inglis try to persuade people to disagree with Paine? Based on this excerpt, what were some strong arguments made by Loyalists?

The deceiver unmasked

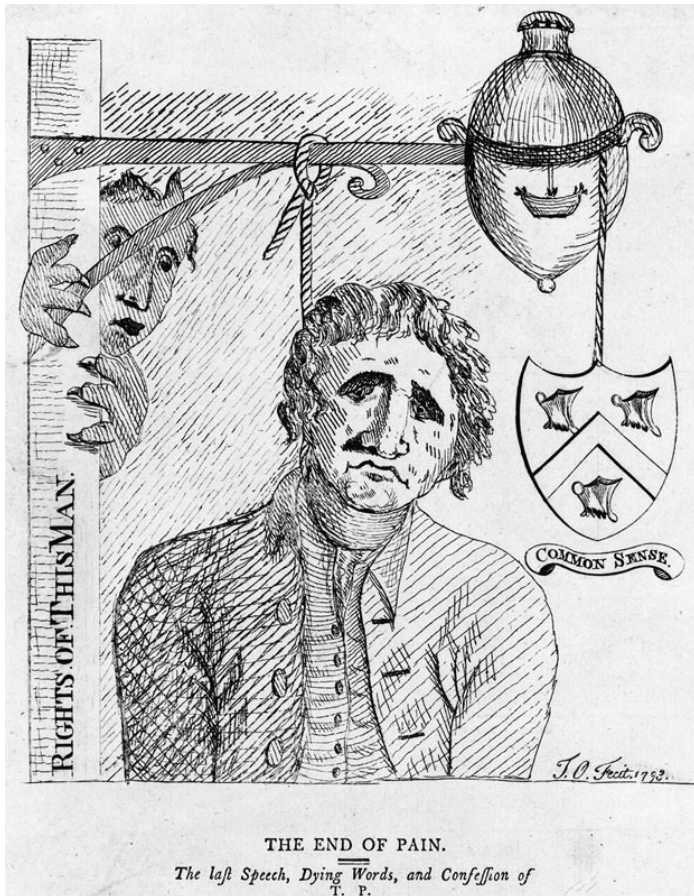
The following pages contain an answer to one of the most artful, insidious and pernicious pamphlets I have ever met with. It is addressed to the passions of the populace, at a time when their passions are much inflamed . . .

The author of COMMON SENSE has availed himself of all those advantages. Under the mask of friendship to America, in the present calamitous situation of affairs, he gives vent to his own private resentment and ambition, and recommends a scheme which must infallibly prove ruinous. He proposes that we should renounce our allegiance to our sovereign, break off all connection with Great Britain, and set up an independent empire of the republican kind. Sensible that such a proposal must, even at this time, be shocking to the ears of Americans; he insinuates that the novelty of his sentiments is the only obstacle to their success,—that, “perhaps they are not yet sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor . . .”

I find no Common Sense in this pamphlet, but much uncommon phrenzy. It is an outrageous insult on the common sense of Americans; an insidious attempt to poison their minds, and seduce them from their loyalty and truest interest. The principles of government laid down in it, are not only false, but such as scarcely ever entered the head of a crazy politician. Even Hobbes would blush to own the author for a disciple. He unites the violence of a republican with all the folly of a fanatic . . . I think it a duty which I owe to God, to my King and country, to counteract, in this manner, the poison it contains . . .

—Rev. Charles Inglis, 1776

Using the four primary sources, describe what Common Sense tried to accomplish, and make an argument about how it created tension in the colonies.



Changing Views of the Past

History is what happened. History doesn't change. But our information about history changes.

What we know about history changes for a variety of reasons. Teams of archaeologists are continually discovering new artifacts. More and more ancient documents are being translated. And advances in technology are providing new information. In all of these cases, new data may change our understanding of history.

But understanding of history can change for another type of reason. It can change because of a change in *historiography*. **Historiography** is the writing of history. Historiographers are the people who write history. They can bring new insights to light in their work. For example, historiographers can bring together facts that have never been considered in connection with each other. This can lead to a new analysis. They can also shift the focus of historical analysis, looking at details, actions, and people who have not previously been the subject of study.

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Benjamin Arthur Quarles was a 20th century African American historiographer. Quarles shifted understandings of history with the publication of his books *The Negro in the American Revolution* (1964) and *Black Abolitionists* (1969). His work brought about a rethinking of the role of African Americans in the history of the War for Independence and the anti-slavery movement.

In the Foreword to the 1996 edition, Thad W. Tate, professor and director of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture at William & Mary states that “*The Negro in the American Revolution* has, then, earned the status of a landmark. It is a work that defines an important turning point in the study of the black experience in the Revolution.”

Gary B. Nash, a history professor who focused on marginalized groups, gives a specific example in the Introduction to this edition. Noting that many enslaved Africans escaped slavery during the Revolution by reaching the British lines, he says the following.

The American public is still largely unaware . . . [of this fact], judging by the silence in almost all textbooks from which young Americans learn their history and by the disinterest in this story by the media.

Quarles, himself, says in his Preface, “The present study proposes to investigate the role of the Negro in the American Revolution and thereby fill a gap in historical knowledge.”

The index of this work is filled with names that are now familiar to American students. But they only became well known as a result of Quarles’s renewed focus on the African American experience in Colonial times. Crispus Attucks, William Lee, Salem Poor, Peter Salem, and Thomas Peters are five African Americans who played a key role in the Revolution and have become more widely known since they were included in Quarles’s study. What they did hasn’t changed. But our information about their contributions has increased, thanks to Quarles.

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- *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia) by Benjamin Quarles. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996, pp. xi, xxi, xxx.

Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" (1775)

Life was tense in the colonies as people were becoming angrier with England. The British Parliament had punished the colonies with harsh laws because of their role in the Boston Tea Party. The Americans had sent King George III a petition to repeal the laws they named the "Intolerable Acts."

Colony leaders gathered on March 23, 1775 for the Second Virginia Convention. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and five Virginians who later signed the Declaration of Independence were in attendance to debate whether the colonies should go to war with England. Many were divided on what to do.

It was there that Patrick Henry delivered a passionate speech in an attempt to unify the colonies. It was so moving, his fellow delegates were persuaded to prepare for war. A Baptist minister who was present described him as having "an unearthly fire burning in his eye."

Henry's speech was later named "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death." Unfortunately, Henry didn't write his speech on paper and no one recorded the exact words down. Historians managed to piece together fragments from people who were there through interviews and their writings.

No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men,

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engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House. Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us: they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing.

We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne! In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free-- if we mean to preserve inviolate those

inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending--if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained--we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. The millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable - and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace - but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

• "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death," speech to the Second Virginia Convention by Delegate Patrick Henry, Richmond, VA, March 23, 1775.

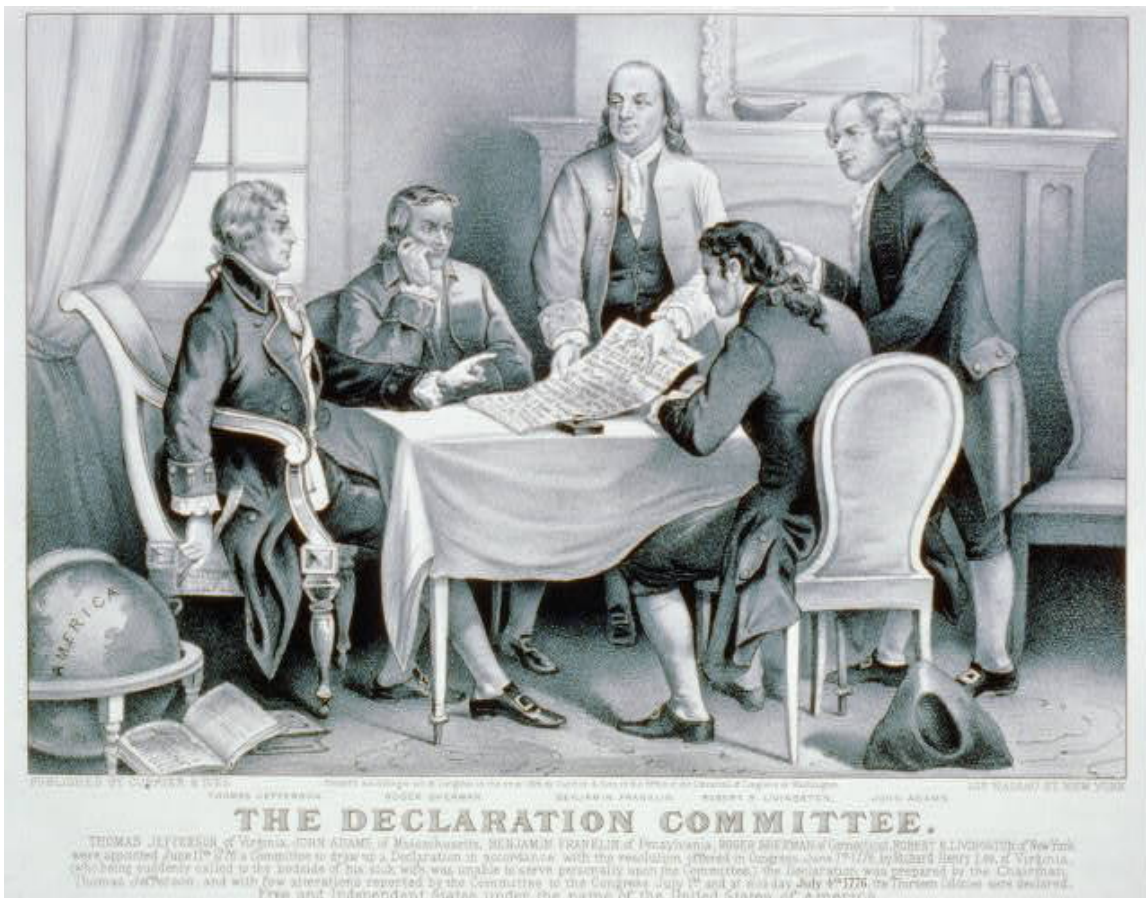
Entire Selection: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/patrick.asp

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Thomas Jefferson's Drafts of the Declaration of Independence (1776)

Thomas Jefferson was the primary writer of the Declaration of Independence. He was tasked with drafting the document because of his skill with pen and paper. However, the Continental Congress also appointed John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston as a committee of five, including Jefferson, to help create the declaration.



Jefferson created several drafts but showed a "fair," or cleaned up version he called the "original Rough draught" to Adams and Franklin before he showed the rest of the committee.

They made a total of 47 revisions then presented the document to Congress. After the vote for independence passed, Congress made an additional 39 changes. The final declaration was adopted on July 4, 1776. There were 86 total changes made to the Declaration.

Jefferson wasn't happy about many of the additions and deletions of his draft. One section in particular about slavery was left out. Many Americans including Jefferson owned slaves but angrily blamed King George III for slavery saying it violated the "most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people." Congress ultimately removed this section because they thought it was too controversial. Other areas criticizing England too harshly were also taken out. Jefferson said Congress believed they still had friends in England who they did not want to offend.

Below you can find Jefferson's original rough draft and the final draft of the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson's Original Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence

A Declaration of 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 independant 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 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; 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 power 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, 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

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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 accomodation of large districts of people unless those people would relinquish the right of representation, a right inestimable to them, formidable to tyrants alone;

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 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 colonies, 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, and amount of their salaries;

he has erected 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, independant of and superior to the civil power;

he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitutions and unacknoleged 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-trial 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 offences;

for taking away our charters, 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, 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 compleat 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 in our fellow-subjects, with the allurements of forfeiture and confiscation of our property;

he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most

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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. 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 die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, and 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 hardness of one man, adventured within the short compass of 12 years only, on so many acts of tyranny without a mask, over a people fostered and fixed in principles of liberty.

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 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 expence 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 native 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 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 and 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 glory and happiness is open to us too; we will climb it in a separate state, and acquiesce in the necessity which pronounces our everlasting Adieu!

We therefore the representatives of the United States of America in General Congress assembled do, 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 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 a colonies to be free and independant states, and that as free and independant 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.

The Final Draft of the Declaration of Independence

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;

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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.

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

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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, 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.

- "Original Rough Draught" of the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, June 1776.

Entire Selection:

http://www.pbs.org/jefferson/archives/documents/frame_ih198036.htm

Accessed March, 2017

- Transcript of the stone engraving of the parchment of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

Entire Selection: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

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Indian Tribes and the United States Government

Tribal Recognition and the Status of Tribal Governments

The U.S. federal government recognizes 562 American Indian tribes. In addition, some tribes are recognized by a state government but not by the federal government. Tribes vary widely in size, but to be federally recognized they must prove, among other things, that they have existed as a distinct community since “historical times,” that they operate as a “single autonomous political entity,” and that they have governing procedures.

These tribal governments are defined as “domestic dependent nations.” Indian nations are sovereign and their unique political and legal standing has evolved. Under the Commerce Clause in the Constitution, the United States and Congress has the power “To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.” This clause, along with contemporary policy, stresses that the United States and American Indian nations have a “government-to-government relationship”—that is, the tribal government is to be treated as equal in standing to the federal government. It also

emphasizes the federal government's "trust responsibility," its obligation to protect tribal assets and seek the welfare of American Indian communities. Most Indian lands are held in trust by the U.S. government, which provides programs and services to members of the tribes.

Tribal Governments and the Federal Government

Federal policy toward tribal governments has a long and complicated history shaped by the Constitution, Supreme Court decisions, executive orders, existing federal policy, and tribal laws. Each tribe's relationship to the federal government is slightly different, depending on individual treaties, unique relationships, and particular agreements. Regardless of special circumstances, though, federal policy is to approach interactions at a government-to-government level.

Central to the relationship between the tribes and the federal government is the so-called trust relationship. The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs manages this relationship and has responsibility for the 55.7 million acres of land held in trust for American Indians and Alaska natives. The BIA develops forestlands, protects water and land rights, directs agricultural programs, and develops and maintains infrastructure and economic development on these lands. It also runs schools that educate more than 60,000 Indian children through college. In addition, the federal government gives grants to tribes to help finance a range of services, such as health care, social welfare, education, housing, transportation, and environmental protection.

Tribal sovereignty is not absolute, however. For example, the Supreme Court ruled in *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* (1978) that tribal courts do not have criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians on their lands. The Court stated that tribes could not exercise powers surrendered by treaty, prohibited by federal law, or "inconsistent with their status of a domestic dependant nation." The Major Crimes Act of 1885 also limited tribal sovereignty by extending federal jurisdiction into American Indian territory. This entailed that certain crimes committed by American Indians against American Indians on Native territory could fall under federal jurisdiction. These crimes include murder, arson, and burglary. The Major Crimes Act thus expanded the power of the federal government, while further limiting the authority of native tribes. Court decisions and laws passed by Congress continue to define limits to tribal powers.