

CHAPTER 7---DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE in young people's language

The time has come for us to have our own separate nation--a nation that is ruled by no one but ourselves. This nation will be equal to all others on earth. We believe this is the wish of God.

Because this is such an important decision, we feel strongly that everyone should know our reasons for making it.

We believe certain things to be so true that no one would question them:

that all persons are created by God as equal in his sight; that God gives to all certain rights;

that each person's rights must be respected and cannot be taken away for the use of another person. Among these rights are:

the right to life itself

the right to enjoy the special liberties and privileges due us as property owners

the right to look for those things that will bring happiness.

We believe that governments are formed by people for the purpose of protecting God-given rights, and that governments receive all their power from the people.

We believe that when a government fails to protect people's rights, the people have the right to change the government. They may even take it apart and start over. Then they must carefully plan to form a new government that will truly work for the safety and happiness of all.

It is wise to remember that changing a government is a serious matter--especially if that government has been in power for many years. People grow used to it. We have seen through history that even when a government is bad, people often put up with it as long as they can instead of making changes. But a government may grow unfair and cruel. It may try to take all rights away from its people. If that happens, the people must act. It is their duty to end that kind of government. Then they must create a new and better government to protect their rights in times to come.

We have been patient, suffering a long time without complaining. Now it is our duty to make a change. This King of Great Britain, our present ruler, seems set on becoming even stronger. He has already tried to rule us completely, without listening to what our American leaders have to say. And we have proof of such evils. Here are the facts for the whole world to see:

The King has refused to sign laws that our American leaders have written--important laws that are needed for the good of the American people.

The King has controlled the judges in our courts. Judges must please the King in order to keep their jobs and earn a living. How fair can these judges be?

The King has ignored the laws and leadership of our American government. He and others have worked together to make their own set of laws. So now the King feels it is all right to force us to feed and house great numbers of his soldiers, allowing those soldiers to break laws--even murder people--without being punished;  
stop us from trading with the rest of the world;

set up taxes that we must pay, although we have no say in the matter;

punish people without holding a fair trial first.

The King has seized our ships, burned our towns and killed our people.

6 The King has already carried out many acts of war. Now he is sending in an army he has hired--foreign soldiers he is paying to keep up the killing and destruction. Is this the work of a civilized leader?

The King has caused trouble between slaves and their owners, stirring up the slaves to anger and violence. He is even trying to help the Indians in their wars against settlers in the wilderness.

7 Throughout our sufferings we have made our feelings known-politely and respectfully. And things have only gotten worse. A power-hungry King who allows such suffering is unfit to rule. We have warned our friends and family members still in England about this trouble. We have asked them to remember why people came to America in the first place, hoping to turn them to our side. But it seems that neither their sense of fairness nor our family ties is strong enough to change their minds. So they will be like foreigners to us--our enemies in war, our friends in peace.

Therefore, we, the Representatives of the United States of America, look to God to judge our actions. We speak in the name of the good people of these Colonies in making this declaration. We declare that Great Britain no longer rules us--that because of our rights we ought to be free and independent states. Thus, we have all the powers of free states; the power to make war and peace, the power to draw up treaties, the power to carry on trade, and other such problems. We stand united in this declaration, trusting in God and pledging to each other our lives, our fortunes and our honor.

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