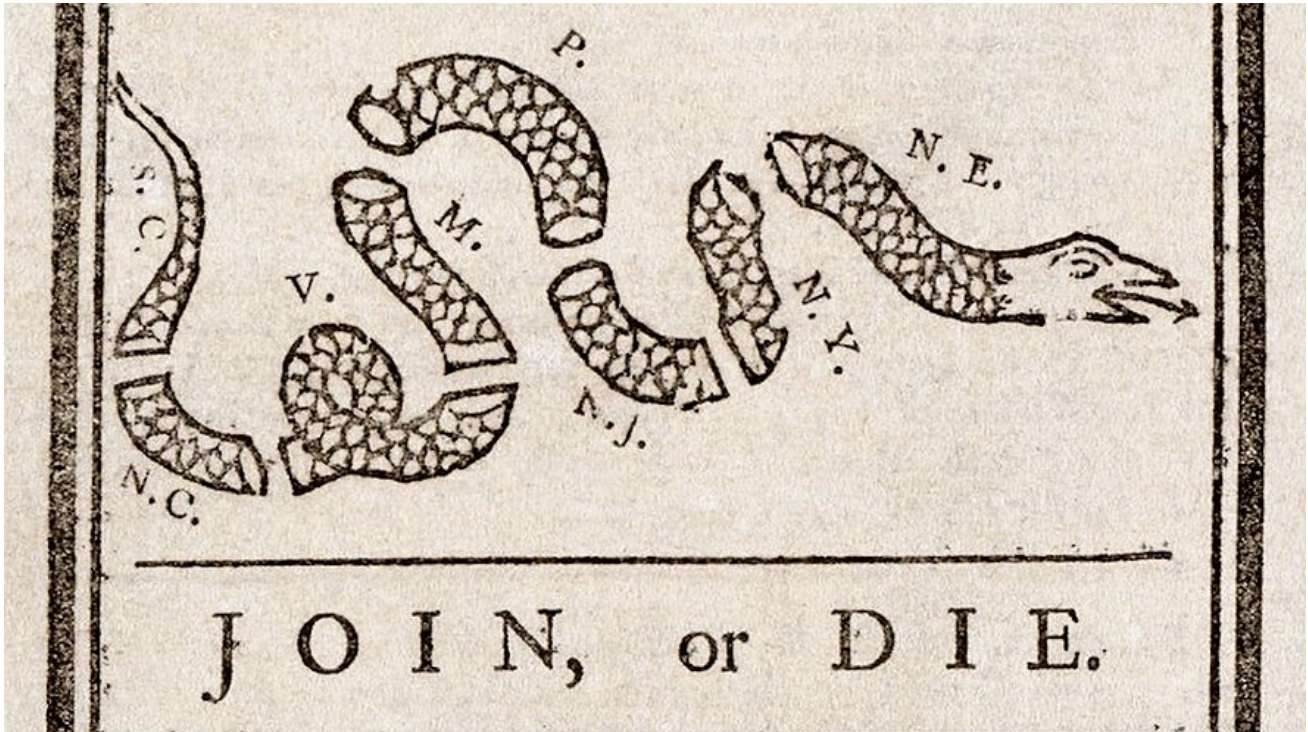


Primary Sources: The Declaration of Independence

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This political cartoon, attributed to Benjamin Franklin, was used to encourage the American colonies to join the Albany Plan for Union. It was printed in the *The Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754. Abbreviations: South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and New England.

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous declaration of the 13 colonies of the United States of America,

There are times when it becomes necessary for one people to end the government ties which have connected them with another, and to take on the power and freedom that are rightfully theirs under nature and God. In such times, they should announce the causes which make them want to be separate.

We believe these truths to be obvious: that all men are created equal, and God has given them basic rights, and that among these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To protect these rights, men have created governments. Governments are only just when they have the support and agreement of the people, and whenever a government becomes destructive toward the rights of the people, the people can change it or abolish it and start a new government.

We know that governments that have been in power for many years should not be changed or replaced for small reasons. For this reason, people are more likely to suffer under a bad government they have gotten used to than they are to change it.

When we are being crushed under a cruel dictator, however, it is our right and duty to rebel. Now, the patient suffering of these colonies must end, and it is necessary to change our system of government.

"A History Of Repeated Injuries"

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and losses of our rights. A cruel dictator rules over these states. To prove this, let these facts be shown to the world:

He has refused to agree to laws that are necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his governors to pass laws that are very important. He says he must approve new laws, but he never does.

He has refused to pass other laws to help large districts of people, unless those people would give up the right to elect people to the legislature. This right is important to them and would only be seen as a problem by a dictator.

He has made lawmakers meet in faraway places. The only reason for this is to make their jobs more difficult.

He has closed down elected legislatures again and again. He has refused to allow others to be elected.

He has tried to stop people moving into these states. He also has made it harder to buy more land.

He has made justice in our courts harder. He has not approved laws for naming judges and having juries.

He has set up many new offices. He has sent swarms of officers to bother our people. These people cost us money and take the food we need.

He has kept standing armies among us to scare us.

He has set up his soldiers to have more power than our own government.

He has worked with others to make us follow rules against our constitution and ignores our laws.

He lets large bodies of armed soldiers live in our homes, and the soldiers are not punished for breaking the law. Trade with all parts of the world has been stopped and taxes are forced on us without our consent.

He has sunk our ships, ruined our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is sending large armies of foreign, paid soldiers to attack us. His own cruelty and lies have caused the death of many.

He has kidnapped our fellows on the high seas and forces them to fight against their own country. They must become the executioners of their friends and brothers. If they refuse, they are killed. He has made brother fight brother and neighbor fight neighbor.

"They Have Been Deaf To Our Voices"

In every stage of these terrible situations, we have, as good subjects of the king, reported these problems, but our repeated pleas for help are not answered. We have patiently tried to reach out to our British brothers, warning them of attempts by Parliament, their lawmakers, to extend an unfair control over us. We have begged for justice and reminded them of our common background and history.

They have been deaf to our voices, though. We must, therefore, announce our separation, and think of them, as we think of the rest of mankind, as enemies in war, friends in peace.

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, ask for the help of God, the supreme judge of the world, to support the goodness of what we now do. In the name, and by authority of the good people of these colonies, we seriously publish and declare that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states. They are freed from all loyalty to the King of England and all government connection between them and the state of Great Britain is ended. As free and independent states, they have full power to start war, make peace, make agreements with other countries, and freely do business.

For the support of this declaration, with a firm belief in protection coming from God's plan, we together pledge to each other our lives, our money and land and our holy honor.

The 56 signatures on the declaration appear in the positions indicated:

Column 1

Georgia:

Button Gwinnett

Lyman Hall

George Walton

Column 2

North Carolina:

William Hooper

Joseph Hewes

John Penn

South Carolina:

Edward Rutledge

Thomas Heyward, Jr.

Thomas Lynch, Jr.

Arthur Middleton

Column 3

Massachusetts:

John Hancock

Maryland:

Samuel Chase

William Paca

Thomas Stone

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia:

George Wythe

Richard Henry Lee

Thomas Jefferson

Benjamin Harrison

Thomas Nelson, Jr.

Francis Lightfoot Lee

Carter Braxton

Column 4

Pennsylvania:

Robert Morris

Benjamin Rush

Benjamin Franklin

John Morton

George Clymer

James Smith

George Taylor

James Wilson

George Ross

Delaware:

Caesar Rodney

George Read

Thomas McKean

Column 5

New York:

William Floyd

Philip Livingston

Francis Lewis

Lewis Morris

New Jersey:

Richard Stockton

John Witherspoon

Francis Hopkinson

John Hart

Abraham Clark

Column 6

New Hampshire:

Josiah Bartlett

William Whipple

Massachusetts:

Samuel Adams

John Adams

Robert Treat Paine

Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island:

Stephen Hopkins

William Ellery

Connecticut:

Roger Sherman

Samuel Huntington

William Williams

Oliver Wolcott

New Hampshire:

Matthew Thornton