The Declaration of Independence
(abridged form)

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political
bonds 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 to 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; 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, 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 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 civil power... 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, burned our towns, and
destroyed the lives of our people...He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign
mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with
circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally
unworth the head of a civilized nation... 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 appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and
we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations... 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 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 levey 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.